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FUNWORLD

SEPTEMBER 2010 • VOLUME XXVI • ISSUE 9

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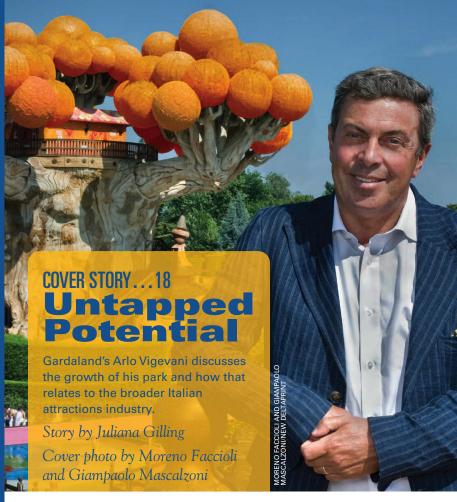
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Funworld is a member benefit of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions



EATURES



SPECIAL SECTION: ASIAN ATTRACTIONS EXPO 2010 Fun in the Sun

IAAPA's Asian Attractions Expo 2010 broke records for exhibitors and attendees. Read about the successful event in Kuala Lumpur in this eight-page review.

Story by Marc Lourdes



Fly off the Shelves

Facilities turn to themed and humorous products to reinforce their brands.

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Fernando Medroa discusses the success and continual improvements at Walibi Belgium. by Jakob Wahl



Plug and Play

How museums get guests involved with cutting-edge technology.

by Marion Hixon

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Our mission is to

serve the membership by promoting

safe operations, global development,

professional growth, and the

commercial success of the

amusement parks and

attractions industry.

View from the other side of the pond

IAAPA's European operators are as strong as ever, and in the past few years IAAPA has made tremendous progress providing services to them in their regions and languages.

Since 2008, membership has increased by almost 20 percent as a result of delivering customized service to

European members. Member outreach takes place on a regular basis, as the IAAPA Europe team has increased communication through a dedicated web portal, e-newsletters, etc.—all translated into the main European languages.

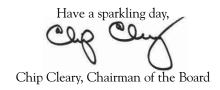
Additionally, the team is involved with regional attraction associations and partner trade shows. This is critical in maintaining a strong connection with the various nations and local industries.

Meanwhile, the IAAPA Europe team has worked hard to improve the Euro Attractions Show's (EAS) overall program and presence, making it the premier industry conference and trade show in the region.

Further to the office's mission, IAAPA established the European Advisory Committee, responsible for the overall direction of its activities, including three subcommittees that identify and serve needs in the areas of government relations, education, and manufacturers/ suppliers. More than 40 European industry professionals serve on the committees, setting the direction for the future of IAAPA Europe.

As chairman, I am pleased to see the European office has come this far in just a few short years. And I'm excited to watch the new office in Latin America and, eventually, in Asia, do the same for their respective regions.

If you have questions or requests for our regional offices, please let us know.



On IAAPA.org

IAAPA Exhibitor Awards: Get more recognition for your company and products. Enter your exhibit or product in this year's Exhibitor Awards! More than 30 awards will be presented at IAAPA Attractions Expo 2010 in Orlando. Don't miss this great opportunity to stand out among your competitors. Visit www.iaapa.org/expos/attractions/awards.asp for information and an application.

U.S. Industry Issues: The IAAPA Government Relations Department is on Capitol Hill advocating for the industry year round. Read the latest updates and information on IAAPA's blog, In the Queue, at

http://iaapainthequeue.blogspot.com/search/label/Government%20Relations.

Regional Office Portals

Get in touch with our representatives in Latin America and Europe by visiting these regional websites:

- IAAPA Europe: www.IAAPA.org/europe/
- IAAPA Latin America: www.IAAPA.org/latinoamerica/

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Jesperhus, Nykøbing Mors (DEN) Kamori Rusutsu, Hokkaido (JPN) Tibidabo, Barcelona (ESP) Lotte World, Seoul (KOR) Agat Asia, Almaty (KAZ) Misa, Kuala Lumpur (MAS) Happy Valley, Shenzhen (CHN) Bogor Nirwana Residence, Jakarta (INA) NP-Zentrum Kellerwald, Vöhl-Herzhausen (GER) AIDAbella (OCEANS) Corpus, Oegstgeest (NED) Gondwana Prähistorium, Schiffweiler (GER)

Galeria Bran, Bran (ROM) AIDAluna (OCEANS) Costa Luminosa (OCEANS) City of Dreams - The Bubble, Macau (CHN) City of Dreams - Virtual Aquarium, Macau (CHN) Aviation Pavilion. World Expo 2010, Shanghai (CHN) Austrian Pavilion, World Expo 2010, Shanghai (CHN) Shanghai Pavilion, World Expo 2010, Shanghai (CHN) Futuroscope, Poitiers (FRA) Madam Tussauds, London (GBR)



:::QUICK HI

Giving a New Meaning to 'Fun Money'

Several years ago, when Worlds of Fun/Oceans of Fun in Kansas City, Missouri, introduced Beagle Bucks, they were seen as a safe way to let little kids pretend to be adults. Instead of carrying cash, which makes them a target for thieves, kids could carry the Beagle Bucks-park money sold in \$1 and \$5 denominations and featuring pictures of Peanuts comics characters Snoopy and Charlie Brown, good for admission tickets, merchandise, lodging, food, and even parking. Now, the park is using the bucks in its group sales efforts, and Brandon Stanley, the operation's public relations manager, answered a couple of questions about this idea:



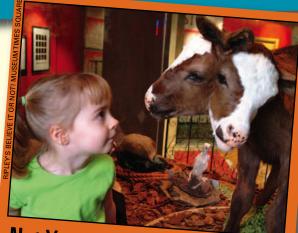
How are Beagle Bucks used in group sales? They're really popular with group sales, where companies will buy Beagle Bucks for their employees. Companies use them like rewards at the events. We also allow them to return them and get their money back.

What are some other advantages of Beagle Bucks? They don't have to carry cash. They can buy them in the park, and [now] they can buy them online and have them delivered by mail, or print an e-ticket that they exchange for Beagle Bucks at the park.



Belly Flopping for a Good Cause

On June 24, firefighters were called to Water World waterpark in Denver, but not to answer an emergency call-rather, to compete in the park's 14th Annual Belly Flop Showdown. The event is held in honor of local firefighters and raises money for a firefighters' charity. The firefighter with the best belly flop into the pool won a week's vacation for two at a beach in Mexico.



Not Your Typical Sleepover

Most museum sleepovers don't feature shrunken heads, live hissing roaches, and two-headed animals. But that's some of what kids get at the Extreme Sleepover at Ripley's Believe It or Not! museum in New York City's Times Square. They also compete in an intense laser race and embark on a flashlight tour and scavenger hunt to find the most astonishing items in the museum's collection. Says Stephen Ekstrom, director of sales and marketing: "The approach we're taking is not creepy or weird—it's fascinating, fun, and exciting."

Coasting on a Whirlwind

This season, Parque de la Costa in Tigre, Buenos Aires, Argentina, opened "Torbellino," ("Whirlwind"), the country's first spinning coaster. Manufactured by Beijing Jiuhua Amusement Rides, the "wild mouse" sit-down ride is the park's fifth roller coaster and twirls guests along 1,116 feet of track.



Sealing the Deal at the Louisville Zoo

This season, the Louisville Zoo opened its muchanticipated seal and sea lion habitat, featuring the animals living in a state-of-the-art outdoor pool that holds 108,000 gallons of saltwater kept at 66 degrees year-round. The facility can house 14 seals and sea lions and also includes a shaded amphitheater that seats 200. It's part of the zoo's \$27 million "Glacier Run" exhibit, which when completed will also include polar bears, Steller's sea eagles, sea otters, and an animal sanctuary.





Fun-for-All Fundraiser

For the second year in a row, Fun Fore All Family Entertainment Center in Cranberry Township, Pennsylvania, had the honor of hosting the Alex's Lemonade Stand fundraising event. The event was set up by a local family wanting to raise money for childhood cancer research after losing a friend to the disease. The event raised \$5,400, and Fun Fore All matched donations up to \$10 on donors' Fun Cards for use in the park.

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Family Entertainment



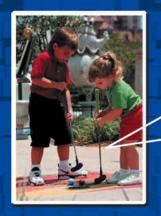




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News Editor Keith Miller goes around the world to bring the industry to you

Racing Simulators at Attractions Going Pro

■ The days of a racing simulator consisting of a fixed, immobile, enclosed cubicle that a driver sits in to watch a single low-resolution video screen are over-if Cruden B.V. (www.cruden.com) of Amsterdam has its way. The company recently opened a new office in Melbourne, Australia, to serve the Asia-Pacific attractions market and build sales for its interactive, full-motion motor racing simulators used by professional racing teams.

"Cruden found that simulation in the attractions market meant sitting down and having things done to you," says Claire Dumbreck, spokesperson for the company. "You see a lot of fixed-base systems with just a steering wheel and pedal in a tub of a car body. But what Cruden offers is full motion with six degrees of freedom. It's truly interactive and you're in control of a vehicle, and if you want to drive like a maniac and get thrown into a wall, you can do that. If you want to drive slowly and smoothly, you can do that, too."

Cruden provides simulators to

international motorsport interests, car companies and automotive system suppliers, and universities and research institutes, as well entertainment venues. The "six degrees of freedom" (6DOF) is the central feature Cruden touts in its Hexatech full-motion simulator. It has six electronic actuators that allow the driver to move in any direction at any rotational angle and also produces realistic gforces; seat belt tensioners and realistic steering feedback heighten the experience. The simulator's state-of-theart graphics can be viewed on ? "wraparound" 42-inch screens or on 3-D projections.

Dumbreck says a Hexatech simulator starts at around \$200,000. "This is professional equipment designed for flight simulators and that Formula One teams are using, and it's as realistic as you can get," she notes. "It's also rather fun to watch."

Indeed, the open cockpit design is another feature of the Hexatech that distinguishes it from traditional racing simulators, affording observers an unobstructed view of the action. "It really works well within an attraction when you want a crowd to gather

"You can get people close to your brand by simulating the experience. In entertainment, it's also becoming more of a family experience and less of a petrolhead enthusiasts market experience."

because you can see it so readily," says Dumbreck.

"Racing simulators make a great spectator sport," says Kerry Michael, owner of Weston-Super-Mare Grand Pier in North Somerset, England, which recently installed two Hexatech simulators. "Not only are they fun to watch, but bystanders can observe the race via the large wraparound screens and really get involved. [They are] one of the Grand Pier's major attractions, and we expect them to be popular among the 'arrive and drive' tourist market as well as frequent-visitor driving enthusiasts."

As to why there's interest now from the entertainment market in high-end simulators previously reserved for the specialized professional training and research market, Dumbreck remarks, "I think because interest in professional simulation and professional equipment is growing. I guess it's driven by the car brands, and a simulator is a good way to do it. You can get people close to your brand by simulating the experience. In entertainment, it's also becoming more of a family experience and less of a petrolhead enthusiasts market experience."

One reason Cruden chose to open a new office to focus on the Asia-Pacific market is the proliferation of motorsport venues in Asia, including the new Changi Motorsports Hub in Singapore, and recently opened Formula One race

> circuits in Singapore and Korea. The company says it intends to tap into the growing interest in top-level motorsport, karting, and race gaming in Asia.

> > Cruden's open-air design makes the simulator fun for bystanders, too.

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:::OUT&BACK

Schlitterbahn Sets **Sights on South** Florida

■ By proposing to upgrade and creatively incorporate existing sports facilities and to use its experience in negotiating long-term Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) property leases, Schlitterbahn Waterparks (www.schlitterbahn.com) of New Braunfels, Texas, has won approval from

the city commissioners in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, for its plan to build a \$110 million waterpark in the city.

Plans call for the park to be located around Lockhart Stadium and Fort Lauderdale Stadium. It will feature Schlitterbahn's signature Transportainment river system, which moves guests from one attraction to another through interconnecting waterways. Also planned

is the Endless Water Slide, which places the exit of one slide directly next to the entrance of another, so instead of searching around for the queue line of the slide they want to ride, guests can exit one slide and be at the entrance to another.

The park will also include many of Schlitterbahn's marquee rides and attractions, including the "Master Blaster" water coaster and "Tidal Wave River." The company's treehouse-style hotel rooms will also be a part of the project.

But what is really striking about Schlitterbahn's proposal is the way in which it plans to incorporate adjacent sports facilities into the project. The company's proposal says it "will create a multisport, multiuse, state-of-the-art athletic facility, complete with environmentally friendly, high-quality products, with both player and fanfriendly amenities."

Nearby Lockhart and Fort Laud-





Above: Rendering of Schlitterbahn Fort Lauderdale

Left: Schlitterbahn's treehousestyle hotel rooms

There is also the matter of the FAA, which is involved because in 1947 it donated to the city of Fort Lauderdale the land where both sports stadiums sit. The FAA wants the Fort Lauderdale Stadium site to be used for aviation purposes, or be leased at a fair-market rate. which the waterpark has indi-

cated a willingness to do.

The company has experience dealing with FAA property leases, as Schlitterbahn Galveston Island, in Texas, is located on 36 acres of FAA property. The lease approval process involved evaluating existing airport leases to arrive at a fair-market value, and Schlitterbahn notes the project has been so successful that Galveston is now putting forward a \$35 million bond issue to independently develop a sports complex on airport land next to the waterpark.

Fort Lauderdale city commissioners say they also selected Schlitterbahn's plan over other proposals for the stadium property because it calls for no tax dollars to come from the city; it would create 400 to 500 jobs during construction and more than 1,000 when in operation; and it would have an economic impact of \$400 million per year.

erdale stadiums will become part of a sports village. Softball, baseball, and golf simulators will arrive, and the Broward County Sports Hall of Fame, with members that include tennis star Chris Evert and NFL Hall of Famer Dan Marino, will be permanently located on the property.

"We just don't go flatten a piece of land and throw up a waterpark," asserts Jeff Siebert, director of communications for Schlitterbahn, "What's neat with all of our projects is that none of them is cookie-cutter—we give each of them a really distinct character."

Schlitterbahn's proposal states the facility will even provide state-of-theart sports training and team housing. Siebert says Schlitterbahn's development team is working with local sporting groups and enthusiasts in creating the village. This includes plans to "renovate and enhance" both stadiums and add a sports retail center.







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Fun Spot USA: FEC or Small Park? It All Depends on Perspective

■ It's no secret the Orlando attractions market suffered during the recent economic downturn. Attendance and revenue at its theme parks fell, airlines cancelled many flights to Orlando International Airport, and local hotels and motels deeply slashed their rates to try to bolster occupancy. But in the midst of this, a local family entertainment center (FEC) not only opened its doors, but also managed to grow and thrive to the point that it might be considered more of a small amusement park now.

Fun Spot USA (www.funspotusa. tutengraphics.com) debuted in 2007 near Kissimmee, Florida, just a few miles from Walt Disney World, with a handful of attractions. John Arie Sr., majority owner of Fun Spot USA, also owns Fun Spot Action Park near Orlando, which he opened in 1998. Upon building out his first FEC by the mid-2000s, he was looking for a larger site on which to expand. After overcoming a few roadblocks, he opened Fun Spot USA and put his son, John Arie Ir., in charge. The economy immediately began to slow, but that didn't stop him from forging ahead with the facility's aggressive growth plans, and now it boasts four go-kart tracks, the tallest skycoaster in the world at 300 feet, and some 20 rides, including a Ferris wheel and a kiddierides section.

If that wasn't enough, the park just announced the addition of a 55-foot-tall roller coaster called "The Galaxy Spin" that will open this Christmas. The "wild mouse" coaster was purchased from Legoland Florida for \$1.3 million. Last year, Legoland bought Cypress Gardens in Winter Haven, Florida, where the coaster was located.

Mark Brisson, marketing manager for both Fun Spot attractions, explains why USA went after a roller coaster: "It was born out of our relationship with Kent Buescher when he owned Cypress Gardens, and he was talking



Fun Spot's Mark **Brisson on buying a** roller coaster: "It was born out of our relationship with Kent **Buescher when he** owned Cypress **Gardens, and he was** talking about the virtue of roller coasters. And then once Cypress **Gardens fell onto hard** times, rides that were supposed to revive [the park] were being sold for 50 cents or less on the dollar, and the coaster is in very good shape."

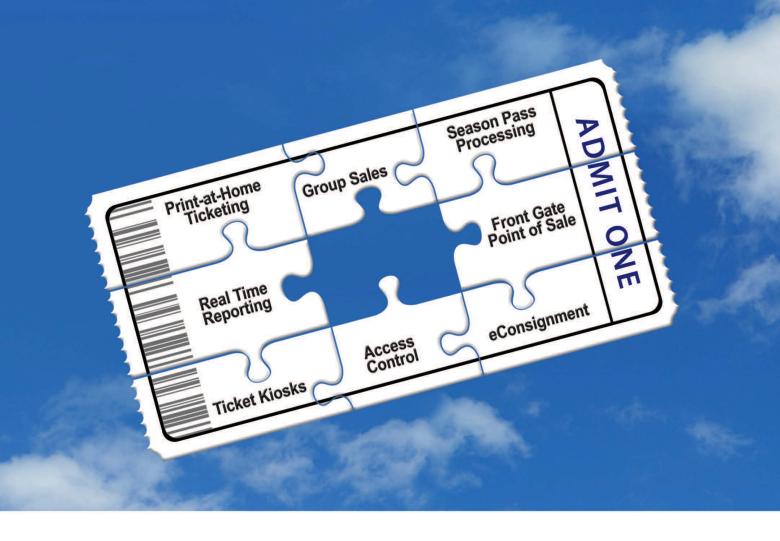
about the virtue of roller coasters. And then once Cypress Gardens fell on hard times, rides that were supposed to revive [the park] were being sold for 50 cents or less on the dollar, and the coaster is in very good shape." Fun Spot USA isn't done yet. Brisson says the park now plans to put rides underneath the skycoaster.

So at what point does Fun Spot USA go from being an FEC to a small amusement park? "We think we already have," he replies. "We're not ashamed of our FEC roots at all, but in any other town, we'd be considered a small amusement park."

Brisson says even in the struggling Orlando tourist market, Fun Spot USA's attendance and revenues were both up in 2009; in 2010, they're currently even or slightly ahead of last year. "The only reason we may only be even and not up so far in 2010 is we had an extremely cold January and February," he notes.

"We do our best to understand our demographics, and we do it through great customer service," Brisson says of his park's success. "We're successful not only in getting people into the park, but getting them to come back. We believe in customer service strongly. Bumper cars are bumper cars, but what makes you choose one place over another is customer service and how you're treated."





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Grand Canyon Skywalk Succeeds Despite Challenges

■ If the idea of floating on a piece of glass some 4,000 feet above the Colorado River and the Grand Canyon floor sounds like an exhilarating experience, there's only one place to do it: the Grand Canyon Skywalk (www.grandcanyonskywalk.com).

The remarkable Skywalk is located about 110 miles from Peach Springs, Arizona, the home of the Hualapai Nation of American Indians, which operates the Skywalk and owns the land where it's located. The Skywalk is a glass-bottomed cantilever bridge bolted to the lip of the canyon, extending 70 feet out from the rim. Opened in 2007, it gained worldwide attention for the extraordinary engineering involved in its construction (the basis for an hour-long program on the National Geographic Channel, for instance) along with the inherent thrill of stepping out onto the glass arc.

But due to its remote location, the astonishing \$31 million Skywalk has faced some significant challenges in becoming a successful attraction. It's situated some two hours from the near-

est town, and the drive to the Skywalk involves a trek over an isolated road not yet entirely paved. It has no access to services such as water and electricity; all power comes via diesel generators, and fuel is trucked in and supplemented with biodiesel produced on site using fryer oil from the Skywalk Cafe. All water is trucked in and all waste is trucked out. Phone and Internet service is accomplished by a satellite connection.

Skywalk General Manager Ted Quasula, a Hualapai Nation member, says even accessing employees is a challenge: "There's minimal housing available, so employee transportation is critical. Employees drive two hours each way each day from Peach Springs, and two and a half hours from Las Vegas. But once the tribe completes the expansion of the Grand Canyon West Airport runway and the road is paved all the way, I think that will relieve the problems of getting here."

Effectively marketing an attraction so isolated is crucial to its success, and the Skywalk accomplishes this by turning the tables and presenting its remoteness as an adventure, not a hassle. "We think we're in such a unique serene location, people will really think it's worth the effort to get here," says Quasula. "We do extensive marketing

abroad with tour companies and encourage them to bring their tourists to us. 'If you're going to Vegas, take some time out to come see us,' we say. We tell them they can ride horses, or take a river raft on the Colorado River to a point below the Skywalk and then take a helicopter ride up to the Skywalk."

Certainly, the Skywalk has quickly become a visual icon and a favorite subject of photographers, something that serves the marketing efforts well. Says Quasula, "Sometimes all we have to do is just show people a few photos of it." To date, the Hualapai Nation says some 1 million people from more than 50 countries have visited the attraction.

The Skywalk will next be promoting its new visitors' center, which the Hualapai Nation hopes will be completed next year. It will be 6,000 square feet on three levels and feature information about the Skywalk and the Hualapai Nation. There will also be fine dining on the second floor overlooking an incredible view of the canyon.

Of the Skywalk's stature as an attraction, Quasula says, "If you go to Paris, you go to the Eiffel Tower; if you go to China, you to go the Great Wall; and if you go near the Grand Canyon, you go to the Skywalk."



IAAPA EUROPE

Management Crash Course

EAS 2010 offers nuts-and-bolts training for the industry's future leaders

IAAPA will offer its signature management development program, the IAAPA Institute for Attractions Managers, in conjunction with Euro Attractions Show (EAS) in Rome in October

The two-and-a-half-day program offers attendees a crash course in attractions management, providing a solid grounding in attraction operations functions and the key drivers and success metrics that managers need to know.

The course is designed for industry professionals with at least three years' experience who have the potential and commitment to be on a senior management team: department heads, directors, and managers. It is also an excellent program for managers entering the attractions industry laterally from other businesses.

Mike Brown, commercial director for Pleasure Beach at Blackpool, who has steered the course from its inception in 2007, says: "It is a great tool for managers in mid-career, to learn about the industry in the widest perspective, see how and why the industry works as it does, as well as build a network of industry colleagues to help sustain your career growth in the future. And of course all of that is being done in a fantastic location: Rome!"

The course has been substantially revamped this year with more emphasis on class interaction, group work, and real-life experiences. "We've listened closely to what past participants have told us and have recrafted the course to take account of that," says Brown. "There is a wealth of talent and experience in the classroom—both presenters and students—and we

aim to leverage all of that to everyone's benefit." The course covers five core subjects: marketing, finance, revenue operations, human resources, and safety.

The course begins on Sunday, Oct. 3, and continues through Oct. 5; it takes place in the center of Rome at the headquarters of ANESV, the Italian Parks Association. Attendees are also registered for EAS 2010, which begins Oct. 6, at the Feira Roma.

Further details on the course, including content information, course faculty, directions, and registration information can be found at www.IAAPA.org/eas.

Course Fee: IAAPA members €474 (US\$612), including VAT; nonmembers €674 (US\$870), including VAT.





European Standards

Technical experts meet to discuss the revision of EN 13814

In December 2004, the first European standard on amusement park safety, EN 13814 fairground and amusement park machinery and structures safety, was published. The standard was drawn up by the Technical Committee CEN/TC 152 with representatives from the amusement ride industry, government entities, and consumers.

EN 13814 specifies the minimum requirements necessary to ensure the safe design, calculation, manufacture, installation, maintenance, operation,

examination, and testing of both temporary and permanent amusement devices. The standard is the reference document for the safety legislation in most European countries.

The EN 13814 is up for revision, and a group of technical experts have formed a committee and are preparing this update. This committee met for the third time June 17-18 in Italy. The committee's work is divided into six working groups, each concentrating on a specific area and chaired by the following:

- Structure and mechanism: Peter Leutenstorfer, TUV Sud-Ger-
- Platform, stairs, and ramps: Edwin Velsink, VWA—the Netherlands
- Guest behavior and risk assessment: Alex Nicholls, LTCI—United Kingdom
- Use and maintenance: Duilio Spolador, Alfaparks—Italy
- Acceleration and passenger restraints: Har Kupers, Vekoma—the Netherlands
- Control systems and electrical: Philipp Geering, Geering Engineering—Switzerland

The committee expects to finalize the preparation of the EN 13814 update by June 2011. EN 13814 is one of a series of safety standards worldwide, all developed to create the safest rides possible for both guests and ride operators. IAAPA's goal is to facilitate the harmonization of the national and regional standards, securing the highest possible safety standard worldwide. A proposed new ISO standard— ISO/TS/P 210 Safety of Attractions was also extensively discussed in the meeting in Italy.

BALPPA Summer Meeting

Every year, BALPPA—the British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers & Attractions—gathers many of its 300 members for a summer meeting, which this year took place in Italy. BALPPA represents the interests of the private sector visitor attractions industry in the United Kingdom, a role it has played since its formation in 1936.

In Italy, the group of 100 participants held its member meeting and visited several amusement parks, including Gardaland (see this issue's cover story), and Italian manufacturers to have a closer look at their factories and recent products. This summer meeting was the last one for BALPPA Chief Executive Colin Dawson, who retires after serving

10 years in this role for the association. He hands over the chief executive mantle to Martin Barratt. Dawson was recently awarded an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours for his services to tourism.





IAAPA EUROPE

Progress Report

With IAAPA's office in Europe, members receive the benefits of local, customized service, as well as being part of the only global association for the attractions industry. Over the past three years, much progress has been made in developing programs, products, and communication outlets specifically for European members. Below are the highlights of what IAAPA Europe provides on the behalf of members throughout the continent.

Information

Every other month European members receive the electronic IAAPA Europe Newsletter, which tracks the latest regulatory developments in Brussels.

All information is also accessible on www.IAAPA.org/europe, which is available in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish.

From the website, members also have the opportunity to download several reports on the European attractions and tourism industries for free.

In 2010, IAAPA Europe sent out the first "What's New" press release to the European consumer press, promoting new investments in member attractions. The press release was distributed in 12 countries and translated into 10 languages.

Safety

IAAPA Europe is one of the driving forces behind the update of the European Amusement Ride Safety Standard EN 13814.

Every year, IAAPA Europe requires members to provide ride-related injury data for the European Amusement Ride Safety System.

IAAPA Europe organizes safety training at the European Safety Forum at the Euro Attractions Show (EAS).

In 2009 the office launched the IAAPA Europe Insurance Program. Members are offered risk management services and insurance products through this initiative.

Lobbying

IAAPA Europe monitors European Union (EU) rule making and lobbies EU Institutions on issues important to the attractions industry such as safety legislation, VAT and taxes, consumer rights, and tourism policies.

IAAPA Europe is the only association representing the attractions industry in Brussels and is part of NET—the primary network of European tourism associations.

Education

IAAPA Europe presents an extensive conference program at the Euro Attractions Show featuring experts and industry leaders.

Industry Data

IAAPA Europe continues to collect and distribute data on the European attractions industry. In 2009, the first European Economic Impact Study was published, mapping the amusement and theme parks in Europe.

Euro Attractions Show

Euro Attractions Show has grown into the primary exhibition and conference for the attractions industry in Europe with 8,000 professionals from more than 70 countries, 270 exhibitors, and more than 8,500 square meters of exhibit space.



Thank you to our global exhibitors!

These exhibitors participated in Asian Attractions Expo 2010 and are contracted for Euro Attractions Show 2010, and IAAPA Attractions Expo 2010. This list was current as of July 16, 2010.

Lo-Q plc

3-D Branded Attractions ABC RIDES SWITZERLAND Aerophile SA Alterface S.A. American Ramp Company Antonio Zamperla SPA Arihant Industrial Corp. Ltd. Bob's Space Racers, Inc. **BRC** Imagination Arts Cogan S.R.L. Dotto S.r.l. eibe Produktion + Vertrieb GmbH & Co. **Empex Watertovs** Fabbri Group Forrec Ltd.

Gateway Ticketing Systems, Inc. Gosetto S.r.l. HAFEMA Water Rides GmbH Heege Freizeittechnik Hopkins Rides **HUSS Park Attractions GmbH IAAPA** Central I.E. Park S.r.I./Amusement Rides & SOLI Bumper Cars Intamin Transportation Ltd./ Ride Trade Intl. Jack Rouse Associates KCC Entertainment Design Lagotronics BV LifeFormations

Mack Rides GmbH & Co. KG
Martin & Vleminckx Rides LLC
MAURER Soehne GmbH & Co.
KG
Mondial World of Rides
Moser's Rides S.r.l.
MP GROUP srl
nWave Pictures S.A.
OmniTicket Network
Pax Company Ltd.
Polin
Premier Rides, Inc.
Premierworld Technology
Limited
Preston & Barbieri S.r.l.

Prime Play by Whitewater
ProSlide Technology, Inc.
S&S Worldwide, Inc.
Sally Corporation
Severn-Lamb UK Ltd.
SimEx- Iwerks
Technical Park S.R.L.
Theme Builders Philippines, Inc.
Theming and Animatronics
Industries S.A.
Vekoma Rides Manufacturing
B.V.
Whitewater West Industries Ltd.
Zierer Karussell- und
Spezialmaschinenbau GmbH

Do Some Good at IAAPA Attractions Expo

Several events during IAAPA Attractions Expo in Orlando benefit GKTW

Hit the fairways, run a 5K, or donate supplies and time to benefit Give Kids The World (GKTW). This year IAAPA is making it easier than ever to support GKTW Village, a resort that creates magical memories for children with life-threaten-

ing illnesses and their families, during IAAPA Attractions Expo 2010. Registration and sponsorship opportunities are available for the following events. For details, visit www.IAAPA.org/expos/attractions/gktwevents.asp.

The Eighth Annual IAAPA International Charity Golf Tournament

TournamentHawk's Landing Golf Club,
Orlando World Center Marriott Resort

Sunday, Nov. 14, 8 a.m.-3 p.m.

Space is limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Register today at www.IAAPA.org/expos/attractions/charityevents.asp. Unable to play but you are interested in supporting the event? Sponsorship opportunities are still available; contact Slavic Stratan at vstratan@ IAAPA.org for details.

First Annual Angels in Action

Give Kids The World Village Sunday, Nov. 14, 12 p.m.-4 p.m.

Become an Angel in Action—register to help perform a variety of tasks at Give Kids The World Village. Be it painting, sweeping, or planting, there are a variety of ways you can lend a helping hand to keep the Village in pristine condition. Contact Jan McCool at jmccool@ IAAPA.org for details.

IAAPA 5K Fun Run & 1K Walk

Give Kids The World Village Thursday, Nov. 18, 7 a.m.-9 a.m.



For the first time in four years the event will take place at the Give Kids The World Village. Runners and walkers will see the Village firsthand as the course winds through the 70-acre resort. Additional information is available by contacting Diane Williams at dwilliams@IAAPA.org.

IAAPA Board Visits Splish Splash

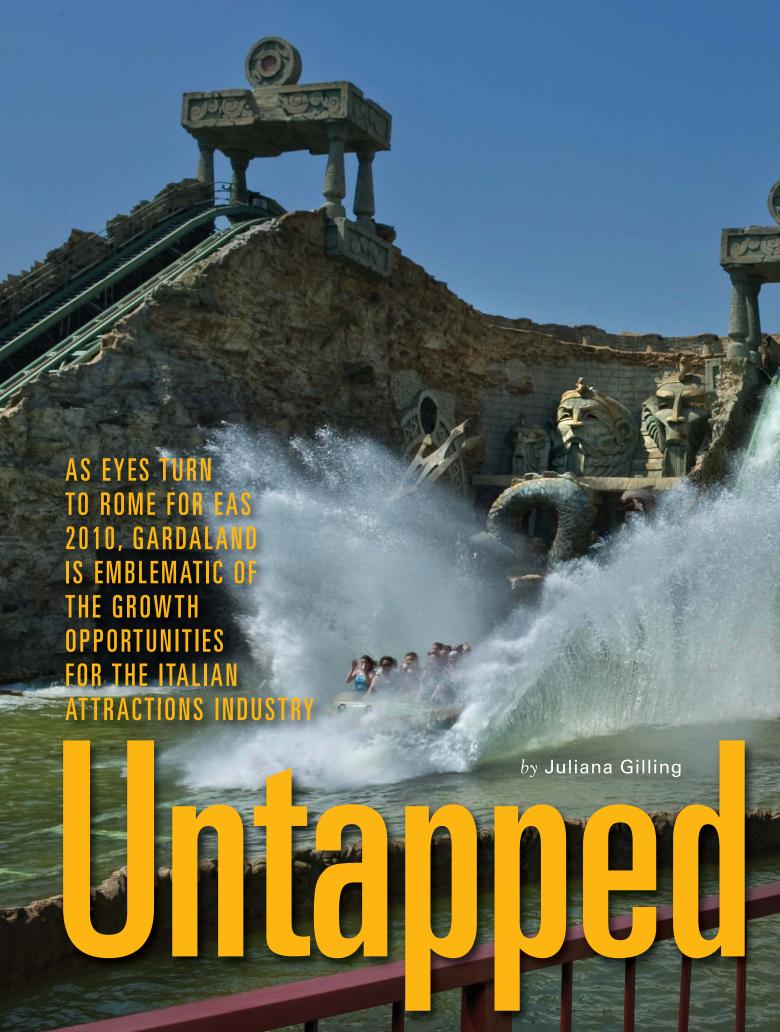
IAAPA Chairman Chip Cleary hosted the IAAPA Board of Directors at Splish Splash waterpark in Calverton, New York, in conjunction with the June IAAPA Board of Directors meeting.



IAAPA Board of Directors, board spouses, and IAAPA senior staff visited Splish Splash Waterpark during the June board meeting.



Mike Bengtson, general manager of Splish Splash, conducted a tour of the park for the IAAPA Board of Directors, their spouses, and IAAPA senior staff.







Alfa Park S.r.l. is "going to change the shape of the Italian theme park market," says the company's marketing manager, Silvia Tracchi. The Brescia-based parks group opened Miragica-Terra Di Giganti (Land of Giants) in 2009 and is launching Rainbow Magic-Land in spring 2011.

"Miragica-Terra Di Giganti is the first theme park in the south of Italy; it's located in Molfetta, a small town near Bari," explains Tracchi. "At Miragica-Terra Di Giganti everything is huge; visitors feel like the park is part of an ancient land where giants lived a long time ago. Our mascot, Samy, is a baby giant.

"Our second season is running very well," she adds. "We have 20 percent growth and we expect around 400,000 visitors in 2010." Tracchi attributes the park's success to its work with schools and groups: "Miragica-Terra Di Giganti is a rich 'edutainment' project for students, and it's becoming an important tourist destination in the Puglia region."

Near Rome, Alfa Park is developing Rainbow MagicLand as part of a mixed-use destination that includes a hotel and the Valmontone Fashion Outlet (which attracted more than 5.3 million visitors in 2008). The group is investing around €300 million (US\$378 million) in the 600,000-square-meter (6.5 million-square-foot) theme park. The attraction will feature 35 rides, including a launch coaster and an indoor spinning coaster, three theaters, and catering facilities.



Vigevani joined the theme park, built by local developers in 1975 in one of Italy's busiest and most cosmopolitan resorts, Lake Garda. Close to the tourist hubs of Verona and Venice, Lake Garda attracts visitors with its Alpine vistas, romantic towns, and Mediterranean climate (except for this year's cold and rainy spring). "Thank goodness the weather has finally gone in the right direction; things are going much better now," says Vigevani, who expects attendance to be more than 3 million this season.

Constant Growth

Gardaland is part of Merlin Entertainments Group's growing attractions empire. In 2006, the group acquired the park for a reported €500 million (US\$630 million) from its two main shareholders, Investindustrial and Banca Popolare di Verona. The deal included a 250-room hotel and a tour operator, Incoming Gardaland.

Merlin inherited a "well-managed park, built on shrewd gut instinct, with a good track record of growth year after year," says Vigevani. Gardaland's original developers invested regularly in the park—extending the land, adding new features, and maintaining quality standards albeit on an ad hoc basis. "Merlin brought in more organic development and a cap-ex cycle," says Vigevani. "Also, we now have extensive customer service and quality monitoring, which is in line with Merlin's strategy."



Merlin backed the Gardaland team's bid to transform the park into a resort destination. The ambition became a reality with the 2008 debut of the Sea Life aquarium second gate. Gardaland now offers guests the option to buy combined park/Sea Life tickets: "Roughly 60 percent of Sea Life's visitors come from the park," says Vigevani.

Planning permission is in place for a second 200-room hotel, and Merlin's deal with CVC Capital Partners (which acquired a 28 percent stake in Merlin in June) means the group has access to fresh funding. This will ensure continuing investment in Merlin's existing estate (with projects like those at Gardaland) and the group's opening plans, including three to four new smaller standalone attractions per year and major projects such as Legoland parks in Florida and Malaysia.

Continued on page 23





Company puts decisions in local executives' hands

"With every business we have, we try to keep the 'ownership' at a local level," says Mark Fisher, Merlin Entertainments' managing director of Resort Theme Parks. "We may set the investment budgets at the center, but Aldo [Vigevani] and his team have to

decide how best to spend that money to meet their targets over the next five years. So when Aldo talks about new developments, while we will look at and challenge them, or help on a strategic level by discussing markets, these are Gardaland's plans. Also, strong local management means that if there were ever changes at the center, it should have very little impact

because the parks would simply carry on functioning.

"It helps that the team here is very strong," he says. "Gardaland is a solid business and a market leader in Italy. In 1978, there were only 500,000 visitors coming in through the gate, so it's already grown into a massive proposition. Divisional director Aldo Vigevani expects attendance to reach 3 million this year.

"We've brought in more of a long-term view, and we carry out structured research into what customers want. There's quite a long way to go here, but the business has matured."

The Italian attractions market reminds Fisher of the UK 20 years ago: "Because of the fragmentation, you've got a real range in quality, and that's a weakness because criticism of any part of the sector can

affect us all as an industry. By maintaining the highest levels of quality, we've managed to stay ahead of the competition."

With Gardaland, Merlin has "learned a lot about resort positioning and we're trying to push that even more," says Fisher. "We'd like to expand the park and hotel offering and put in more second gates here."

> Merlin has also promoted the Gardaland brand outside the parent park: "What was a nice little waterpark in Milan with no real identity is now the Gardaland Waterpark," says Fisher. "We've overlaid the Gardaland values onto it, and it's been growing for the four years that we've had it. We've really learned

how big of an entity Gardaland is in Italy."

After dipping a toe in the water with Sea Life at Gardaland, Merlin is opening a new aquarium next year in the Lido di Jesolo seaside resort, north of Venice. "We're actively looking for sites in other Italian towns—I can quite easily see five Sea Life centers in Italy," says Fisher. "Then we've got other brands to play with. We're rolling out LDCs (Legoland Discovery Centers) in the States, but there's probably space in the market for those here. Also, we've just launched our first Legoland waterpark in California, which is going down an absolute storm. There are so many possibilities, particularly for midway brands like Sea Life and Madame Tussauds in the bigger, tourist-based cities. And who wouldn't want to fly down to one of the most beautiful places in the world to start work on a Monday morning?"



Mark Fisher

Italy's ride manufacturers continue to build on their heritage, creating new attractions to captivate audiences worldwide. "When you are prepared, when you have a good image on the market and you are able to come out with innovative products, you are able to survive, even in difficult times," says Alberto Zamperla, president and CEO of Antonio Zamperla S.p.A.

Zamperla's experience enabled it to deliver 19 rides in 100 days—for the relaunch of the historic Luna Park at Coney Island, New York, in May. "We are proud that the traditions go on and we are part of it," says Zamperla. (For more on the new Luna Park, see the August 2010 issue of Funworld.)

The company's ride package for Luna Park included the world debut of Air Race, which replicates the sensations of an aerobatic flight. Zamperla will present the aerial ride at Euro Attractions Show (EAS) 2010 in Rome Oct. 6-8.

Zamperla invested in the U.S. market after deciding this year to leave the company set up with Italian group Thorus to run Minitalia Leolandia Park. Nevertheless, he is encouraged by the new developments taking place in Rome at Valmontone and Cinecittà: "Finally, it looks like Italy is going to have more than just a few amusement parks, so I am very positive," he says.

Although Italy is a powerhouse ride producer, "We have just two big parks," says Nicola Masin, sales manager for Italian ride manufacturer Technical Park. "The others are small parks with not much more than 300,000

people; they don't have the millions of Mirabilandia and Gardaland for sure. But it's all about the margins: To grow up means big investments and big rides; it's a big risk. Most of these parks don't necessarily want to grow bigger."

Technical Park has three new rides for 2010. Street Fighter Revolution is "a classic pendulum ride but we are now able to make a total revolution of 360 degrees," says Masin. The Loop Fighter is a pendulum ride with a seat design that allows people's arms and legs to move freely while the gondola is spinning and looping. The Baby Aviator interactive roller coaster allows riders traveling in mini-seaplanes to fire water cannons at other vehicles and spectators. Portugal's Aquashow park and Finland's Linnanmäki Park have already placed orders.

Andrea Munari, sales director at I.E. Park, is seeing buyers returning to the market, especially in traditional territories like Europe and North America. "Amusement parks are gaining confidence because the public has drastically reduced their longhaul trips; people are staying regional and going to amusement parks," he says. "In Italy, there is some investment in major parks, and waterparks are gaining momentum. Traveling parks are in deep crisis, but amusement parks are producing good numbers." Munari predicts more consolidation among medium-sized parks.

For EAS 2010, I.E. Park is introducing a new interactive carousel and plans to offer its first loop coaster in 2011.











Continued from page 20

In line with the Merlin cap-ex cycle, work has also started on a new "world first" ride at Gardaland due to launch in 2011. Vigevani is tight-lipped about the "very big ride."

"This year, with the economic downturn, we wanted to offer our main target groups a good reason to come," says Vigevani. Gardaland had two new attractions for 2010: the "Inferis" ("Inferno") horror maze for teenagers and the family-oriented and effects-laden SpongeBob SquarePants 4-D movie, a new brand for Italy.

Industry Challenges in Italy

Theme parks can be a tough sell in such an alfresco culture. Italians love open-air activities and the seaside, which goes some way to explaining why "this is an underdeveloped and under-supplied market compared to other countries," says Vigevani. "Our research shows that the average Italian visits the park once every three years, though there is a big appetite every time you present a novelty." Italians account for 90 percent of Gardaland's business, with the remainder of visitors driving in mainly from Germany and Austria.

While the Merlin and Parques Reunidos groups have snapped up the country's two biggest parks—Gardaland and Mirabilandia, respectively—many other homegrown attrac-



tions are family owned. "The market is very fragmented, but there is the opportunity for it to work," says Vigevani. "Up until now few parks have existed, especially in central and southern Italy, so there is definitely space for growth."

Should Italians worry about overseas companies buying up their theme park assets? "Italians are used to it because it is not only the parks," Vigevani says. "Our most famous brands from food to fashion are, in the end, a foreign corporation and it makes no difference. From a local point of view, Gardaland

At Euro Attractions Show 2010

Don't miss the outstanding education lineup at Euro Attractions Show 2010 in Rome. See page XX for more information, and visit www.IAAPA.org/eas for complete conference and trade show information.

has always been seen as a Veronese property."

In fact, the deal has been mutually beneficial. Gardaland's powerful reputation has opened doors for Merlin's other brands in the country: "Sea Life was unknown in Italy so, in the beginning, we had to say to our clients, 'This is the aquarium of Gardaland and its name is Sea Life," says Vigevani. "Now, two years on, Sea Life is getting more and more independent in terms of its image."

As for the challenges ahead: "One of the reasons for Gardaland's success is the quality of the experience: Gardaland is famous for its theming, cleanliness, landscaping, and Italian meals. The challenge is to keep that quality high," he says. "We should be ready to fight against negative economic trends which influence people's spending attitudes and external leisure competition. I want to consolidate our destination strategy, which means expanding the accommodations and packages, and enlarging the park offering. People should see the Gardaland resort as the ideal location to spend a precious weekend.

"The other objective is to increase the frequency of people's visits. I don't think there's a specific Italian recipe to be successful in this market—quality and value for money are the main ingredients."

Juliana Gilling is a specialist attractions journalist. E-mail: julianagilling@gmail.com.



Asian Attractions Expo 2010 shatters records in Kuala Lumpur

by Marc
Lourdes

The Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre has now seen it all. The state-of-the-art conference and exhibition facility, smack in the middle of the tropical Southeast Asian city and surrounded by lush gardens, has hosted events ranging from defense expost to jewelry shows to education fairs to political gatherings.

But if the center's walls could speak, they would probably say July 14, 2010, was unusual even by their standards.

IAAPA's Asian Attractions Expo 2010, held for the first time in Malaysia, saw the usually staid and serious halls of the convention center turned into a surreal fairyland of rides, games, and high-tech products and services, all designed with one purpose in mind: to give guests thrills and spills and memories to last a lifetime. Then again, what else could one expect from a trade show that involves the best and biggest players in the global amusement park industry?

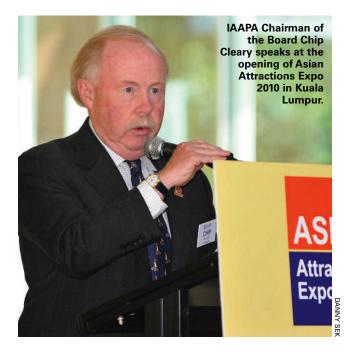
Asian Attractions Expo 2010 was a success by any measure, shattering both attendance and exhibition records for

the annual event, the largest of its kind in the region. This year there were 212 exhibiting companies from 30 countries, up from 142 exhibitors and 26 countries in 2009. Those businesses showed their wares across a sellout space of more than 4,000 square meters (43,000 square feet), up a thousand square meters (10,763 square feet) from last year. Meanwhile, more than 3,200 buyers (up from 2,900 last year) turned out for the event.

Malaysian Tourism Minister Dato' Sri Dr. Ng Yen Yen, when launching the event, seemed almost awestruck: "I should have asked my son and grandson to come. This is like a theme park, in a way. I wish more events were as participatory and as stimulating to the senses as this one is."

Dr. Ng enthused about having more theme parks in Malaysia and spoke about carving out niche markets, such as jungle-themed parks and facilities that reflected the country's "Malaysia Truly Asia" tourism slogan.

Dr. Ng's words must have been sweet music to IAAPA



Chairman Chip Cleary's ears: "When you look at the globe, the action is in Asia. The level of construction here is very impressive. As the economy emerges, there'll be more and more visitors."

The growth of consumer demand in Asia was reflected by the amount of floor space taken up by exhibitors eager to share their products with the burgeoning market. Alterface Building CEO Benoit Cornet was pleased with the increase in attendees, and said Asia has become the market to test new ideas and products. "Everybody presents new products here, and they then have a couple of months to finalize it for Europe and the U.S.," he said. "Asia is a trend setter."

For Ronald Allen James, a project superintendant at



Malaysian company Z'odd Design Sdn Bhd, the Expo had a sentimental tinge: "For me, it's like a homecoming. I've been in the industry for 18 years, and I get to see a lot of old friends."

John Swartebroeckx with scenic design firm Themebuilders Phillipines said, "The show outcome was beyond our expectations." He said representatives from his company talked with a number of serious prospects and noted a great deal of decision making was taking place at the show.

The satisfaction all around was reflected by attendees in the number of queries at the IAAPA booth about next year's event, which will be held in Singapore in June 2011. Meanwhile, more than 60 percent of the show floor is already contracted for next year's show.



From left: IAAPA Third Vice Chairman Will Morey; IAAPA First Vice Chairman Bob Rippy; Dato' Richard Koh, president of Malaysia Association of Amusement Themepark & Family Attraction; Dato' Dr. Victor Wee, chairman of Tourism Malaysia; Dato' Sri Dr. Ng Yen Yen, minister of Tourism Malaysia; IAAPA Chairman of the Board Chip Cleary; IAAPA President and CEO Charlie Bray; Rob Bradley, president of Australian Amusement, Leisure and Recreation Association Inc.; Darrell Metzger, 2009 IAAPA chairman of the board

INDAH MANUFACTURERS SDN BHD came up with an interesting innovation on an industry staple. The Malaysian firm tweaked a touchscreen horoscope machine to release space on the screen that can be sold for advertising purposes. The firm is hoping to market its version of the horoscope machine outside Malaysia and has installed multilingual software to help it achieve its aims. Company owner Lim Eng Hock said if advertising space can be sold on the machines, they would be profitable even when not being used by customers.

POLIN WATERPARKS AND POOL SYSTEMS unveiled a thrilling waterslide called the King Cobra. Built from fiberglass and designed to resemble its reptilian namesake, the patented King Cobra enables two

people on tubes to race



through twin circular paths with twists, turns, and a 50-degree drop before ending up in the maw of a gigantic snake. Polin Sales Manager Kubilay Alpdogan, who could barely control his excitement when speaking about the ride, said additional features such as lighting and sound effects can be included, as well. An order for the ride has already come in from a Russian theme park.



Ozkan Ikiz, an international sales representative with Polin Waterparks and Pool Systems, discusses the company's new King Cobra ride with attendees.

MVR RIDES will soon introduce a new interpretation of a theme park staple. The company will deliver a wooden roller coaster to the OCT park in Wuhan, China, late next year. The ride, called "High Five," will be the first racing wood coaster in Asia and will be twice as long as "Fireball," which MVR recently delivered to OCT Shanghai. The coaster will also feature ergonomic seat restraints that eliminate the need for traditional seat belts. And why is it called "High Five?" The tracks at one point come together at a 90-degree angle, enabling rival riders to "high five" one another.

Networking Events Visit Local Attractions

Asian Attractions Expo participants were given the chance to take part in two excursions. One was a behind-the-scenes tour and beach party at Sunway Lagoon, Kuala Lumpur's renowned waterpark. The 88-acre facility, with five different concepts, has previously won the Best Asian Attraction Award three years in a row and is arguably the standard-bearer of the Malaysian amusement park scene.

Sunway Lagoon made it a quartet of awards in as many years when it picked up the Best Medium Sized Attraction at the Asian Attractions Awards 2010 during the Expo. India's Taj Mahal was named the Grand Winner, Resorts World Sentosa in Singapore won the Large Attraction Award, and Sentosa 4D Magix came out tops in the Small Attraction Category. Sunway Lagoon also picked up the Best Waterpark prize.

There was also a post-show trip up to Resorts World Genting Highlands. Affectionately known among locals as The City in the Clouds, Genting Highlands is one of the



IAAPA Chairman of the Board Chip Cleary with Aaron Soo, CEO of Sunway Lagoon

world's largest integrated theme park resorts, featuring casinos, indoor and outdoor theme parks, and frequent events, concerts, attractions, and activities.

Industry players were also given the chance to rub shoulders at networking galas. The Opening Reception was held at the lower level of the Convention Centre, at Aquaria, a world-class aquarium. Attendees toured the facility, took in the mermaid show, and enjoyed the drinks and hors d'oeuvres as they built relationships with other industry players.

The Young Professionals Reception, closed to industry "veterans," was held at 7 Atenine, one of Kuala Lumpur's swankiest nightspots. The industry's future movers and shakers were given the opportunity to get to know one another over drinks at a place recently awarded the Best Restaurant Bar Award 2010 by Singapore Tatler.



Who Said Learning Isn't Fun? **Education Program Focuses on Marketing, Operations**

The education program this year focused on two main areas: marketing and operations, the result, Cleary said, of input from an IAAPA committee that includes representatives from Asia. Safety was accorded a full-day seminar of its own the day before the trade show floor opened and was attended by a record 170 people.

During the event Jim Seay of Premier Rides Inc. gave an overview of ASTM International ride standards and discussed ongoing standards harmonization efforts. Gary Wong, engineer for the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department of the Hong Kong government, discussed government relations issues in Asia. Specifically, he addressed how rides are regulated in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, related legislation, the regulatory process, and personnel issues. Finally, Noble Coker of Hong Kong Disneyland gave an overview of the park's approach to safety, including discussions of design/engineering, operations, guest expectations/satisfaction, performance alignment, partnering with guests in safety through communication tools, and engaging Cast Members in safety.

The remaining three conference days were dedicated to the other two focus areas. Here's a sample:

 Ocean Park Hong Kong Sales and Marketing Executive Director Paul Pei shared his theme park's strategy for dealing with regional competition. His mantra—gleaned from his 89year-old father—was simple: "Never pick a fight with someone bigger than you. You'll lose and you'll hurt real bad."



Paul Pei

Instead, his strategy was to make the product different from its competitors and not try to take them head on. Pei shared the creative solutions his company came up with that helped the company survive competition and thrive because of it.

■ Sentosa Leisure Group Commercial Director Susan Ang and Ocean Park Hong Kong Executive Director of





C2 TURNKEY SOLUTIONS showcased its Nanospheron. The dome-shaped theater allows for 2-D and 3-D presentations to be projected all around its inner wall, with the audience ensconced inside. The effects, especially in 3-D, are truly stunning. General Manager Roland Pfluegl said one of the most impressive elements about the Nanospheron is that the entire system is auto-calibrated and can be controlled with the touch of a button. Pfluegl used an iPad to control the dome to illustrate his point.

RAVE SPORTS has given birth to an idea that is as simple as it is brilliant. The company has taken a float tube, the kind found in swimming pools the world over, and improved on one of its most annov-



Premium Single Tubes

ing features. Gone are the easily damaged pinch-welded seams that chafe and irritate swimmers' skin. Rave Sports has introduced smooth, overlapping, heat-welded seams both inside and out. The company claims this at least doubles the tube's lifespan. The tube also comes with a tamper-proof security cap for its inflation/deflation valve.

UNIQUE GREEN, which manufactures playground equipment, has a new line of space-age children's rides. Star of the show is the JP Orbit, which is built on the principles of a human gyroscope. The JP Orbit is made for children older than 12 and moves about 90 degrees as opposed to the full circle a human gyroscope can do. The ride also allows the user to be seated, unlike the gyroscope.







Susan Ang

Joseph Leung

Revenue Joseph Leung presented ideas on using marketing to increase revenue operations. Ang's advice was to turn an amusement park product into an *experience* and to focus on one or two approaches: for example, value for money, instead of adopting a scattergun policy. And in keeping with the fast pace of modern technology, she counseled using social networking and online technology for marketing purposes.

Leung, meanwhile, cautioned his audience to control their destiny before somebody else did and told them to change before they were forced to. He also spoke in favor of parks owning their own retail and food and beverage outlets as opposed to leasing out space to third parties.

■ Hong Kong Disneyland Vice President of Park Operations Noble Coker, the impossibly youthful-looking and exuberant

American, entertained as much as he educated. He pointed out a 5 percent increase in the rate of customer retention increases profits from 25 percent to 100 percent. He also shared some of the Disney magic that entices visitors to return again and again.

Coker's talk, filled with amusing anecdotes and self-deprecating humor, essentially focused on how to "stage" experiences and "creat



Noble Coker

to "stage" experiences and "create" memories. His tips

included involving *all* the guests' senses during the entertainment, creating a harmonious storytelling experience, giving people value for money, and, most important, ensuring employees of an amusement park, though having different *jobs*, share the same *role*: entertaining the guests.

■ Another showman whose flamboyance was appreciated by attendees was The Sudden Impact! Entertainment Company Chairman and CEO Lynton V. Harris. Harris highlighted

how important it is to create an emotional connection with a theme park visitor, insisting that live theater and entertainment provide an emotional connection that mere rides, no matter how outstanding, would be hard pressed to replicate. "It's all wood until you bring it to life," he said. "Good theater is about engaging people and getting an emotional response."



Lynton V. Harris (center), speaker at Asian Attractions Expo and chairman and CEO/creative director of The Sudden Impact! Entertainment Company, receives a BrandLaureate Brand Personality Award at a ceremony at Sunway Lagoon Theme Park on July 15. From left: KK Johan, president, The BrandLaureate; Lynton V. Harris, and Aaron Soo, CEO, Sunway Lagoon Theme Park

Harris brought along an actor playing a zombie bellboy to his presentation. The zombie stood still with a goofy grin on his face before creeping around the room unnoticed to scare the living daylights out of one of the ladies in the audience. The victim was freaked out, the rest of the room was amused, and Harris had proven his point.

Marc Lourdes is currently a producer for Malaysian TV station, Bernama TV. He has previously worked at Malaysian papers The Star and the New Straits Times as well as at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in Missouri.





Asian Attractions Expo 2010

PHOTOS BY DANNY SEK



































Facilities turn to themed and humorous retail products to reinforce their brands

FLY OFF the SHELVES

by Marion Hixon When you have a "hot" product, you just know it—the retail items that draw "oohs," "ahhs," laughter, and comments from

passersby and can't seem to stay in stock. Customers want something different—whether it's a fashionable or humorous take on apparel, a souvenir steeped in popular culture, or merchandise that reflects the region. Putting their money down means taking home a piece of the attraction—their experience; so while classic logo souvenirs will always sell, it's important to offer a variety of options. Retail managers and manufacturers know this and are stocking the shelves accordingly. Here are a few rising trends, services, and retail items permeating the attractions industry.

Three Runaway Ideas

Stone Mountain Park (SMP, www.stonemountainpark.com), in Stone Mountain, Georgia, finds success in reinforcing its brand and the specific entertainment it offers with popular merchandise. "Our ultimate goal at Stone Mountain Park is to create memories worth repeating for our guests," says Sara Van Pelt, revenue director at Stone Mountain Park. "We are always looking for new and creative ways to send that memory home with them."

Stone Mountain has one of the longest-running laser light shows in the country, "Lasershow Spectacular." As a result, kids and grown-ups alike are constantly seen mimicking the nighttime show with SMP-branded light saber swords flailing

Trust in Your Brand What's hot and why this year at Europa-Park

At Europa-Park (www.europapark.de), both park-branded and nonbranded retail items play a large role in annual revenue. Ralf D. Stumpf, director of shopping at the park, talks to Funworld about selling a brand, displays, and what to look for in a supplier.

What trends have been popular this season at Europa-Park?

We see a strong trend toward on-ride photos and Europa-Park-branded clothing, and in non-branded merchandise, T-shirts for teens with antique labeling are quite popular in 2010. Fashion is playing an important role and must not be ignored when it comes to clothing. (Editor's note: Read more about fashion trends in the award-winning article "From the Runway to the Midway" in the June 2009 issue of Funworld.)

We also offer park merchandise for a large target group, selling merchandise branded according to our characters, like Euromaus & Co.; specific rides; and even themed areas. All of these items are very successful.

What do you look for when choosing a manufacturer?

A manufacturer's track record for reliable safety standards, the environmental conditions of their workplace, and their social consciousness are becoming more and more important in the merchandising industry. For instance, we work with the textile company Switcher; in their manufacturing countries, they build schools, prevent child labor, and ensure fair wages.

It is highly important for merchandise manufacturers to offer full, consistent product lines; individual items are rather uninteresting for the customers. And it is essential that the designers understand merchandising items are not merely promotional articles and therefore require more elaborate thinking and a subtle design.

What layout and shop designs have you found to draw in more customers?

Our retail shop designs are very important and must be strongly related to the items offered inside. For example, fashion clothing and home décor items need to be presented in a stylishly decorated shop, whereas articles related to rides require a more "adventurous" surrounding. Sweets are best sold in typical kiosks, as this ensures quick and easy on-the-go shopping.



about. The souvenirs—officially known as "Adlucem Light Show Sword"—light up on each side, change from red to green to blue, and emit action sound effects like a low humming and a crack of action.

"All of our glow products are very popular because the laser show is at 9:30 p.m., and it's a good accompaniment to the nighttime atmosphere," Van Pelt says. "On a strong Saturday, we sell about 500 per night."

Another growing trend is the personalization of customer-created stuffed animals. The Georgia attraction opened the Stone Mountain Park Pet Store in 2010, where visitors get to stuff and personalize their own keepsakes—animals include bears, monkeys, pigs, lions, and frogs—and many of the miniature clothes come emblazoned with Stone Mountain Park logos so customers can remember their trip. "Anything we customize with Stone Mountain Park's name—from privately labeled candy, jams, or beach chairs—sells really well," Van Pelt says.

One additional trend at the park is the spike in profits from religious apparel. "It's sold better than I ever would have imagined," she says, of the unexpected trend at the park. The apparel line—sold at SMP's Adventure Center store—is manufactured by Kerusso Clothing and is geared toward teens and 20-somethings. Van Pelt describes the T-shirts as reminiscent of graphic-driven apparel often found at concert venues. "A lot of people are looking for trendy ways to express their faith," she says.



Flip Through the Memories

Not all great products sit on shelves, waiting to be picked up and tried on. Shawn Kelly realized this over the past four and a half years, and together with his wife, Amy, purchased the patent-pending rights to PicFlips LLC (www.iloveflipbooks.com). The photo flipbook service films customers in front of a 10-foot-square backdrop, captures the video in still frames, and, within a minute and a half, produces a small booklet through which guests flip to watch their video in action. Meanwhile, there are multiple screens where participants can watch themselves and passersby to view the activity.

The interactive souvenir service has a permanent point-of-sale kiosk at Dallas-Fort Worth attractions like Great Wolf Lodge and Ripley's Believe It or Not! In addition, the Kellys found success in their PicFlip mobile operations, setting up temporary operations at charity organizations, corporate functions, and special events at a range of locations, including the Fort Worth Zoo.

"We really work with the attractions to showcase their facility or the rides people are experiencing there," Kelly says

IAAPA
Attractions Expo

Redu Souv Inven Mond 2:30-

Reduce Your Souvenir Apparel Inventory Costs Monday, Nov. 15, 2:30-3:45 p.m.

Speakers discuss how in-house production can help reduce your risks and inventory costs.

of personalizing the flipbooks. Great Wolf Lodge's books are customized with images of its "Tornado" waterslide and the lodge's main entrance.

And the demographic for the book easily matches that of

attractions guests—Kelly says some of PicFlips' biggest customers are moms with kids, as they want a keepsake to commemorate their experience or to send off to grandparents.

"You'll notice that a customer is more standoffish beforehand, but when they're in front of the camera, they cut loose," he says. "Then they flip through their book immediately after they get it and all their friends crowd around."



PicFlips is popular at special events like the one above held at the Fort Worth Zoo. Depending on the number of staff present, the company can sell and produce between 50 and 100 flip books per hour.



Put a Pouch on It

George Keppler was sitting in his house on a lazy Sunday afternoon when his wife made fun of the size of his stomach, upon which he had perched a beer bottle. After she referred to it as a "shelf," a lightbulb went off in his head. "The next thing you know, I was running around the house with a beer duct taped to my belly and thought, 'This could work; it's a great idea'," says the co-owner of Brew City Promotions (BCP, www.brewcitypromotions.com) and developer of the beer pouch sweatshirt. The resulting apparel has a regular kangaroo-style pouch for both hands and an additional vertical pouch to hold bottles of soda or beer—or any type of snack. The holding pouch is lined, preventing condensation from "sweating" through the material, and an elastic band keeps the beverage in place.

Brew City Promotions, the brand behind the pouch, began in a mall retail store. When employees started creating their own graphics and products, it quickly grew into the wholesale world. Now the beer pouch sweatshirt has been sold at the Seattle Space Needle and Epcot at Walt Disney World; in the nonattractions world, the company has filled orders for the "Late Night with Jimmy Fallon" TV talk show, and Miller Coors gift shop.

"Customer response to the beer pouch sweatshirt has been phenomenal; it is one of the first items they migrate to due to its uniqueness and functionality. And it's perfect for the many outdoor sports and festivals we have in Milwaukee," says Kindra Loferski, guest relations manager at Miller Brewery Tour, which sells the sweatshirt in its gift shop.

"People respond to fun and humor, especially if it doesn't go down the route of being crass or brazen—that philosophy drives a lot of our product concepts," says Keppler, adding that watching customer reaction in the retail and wholesale markets taught BCP what buyers want. It's a message to manufacturers as well as retailers to keep shelves and products fresh and not be afraid to take risks.

"When everything looks so bland and the same, it's important to have something different on the sales floor so customers will remember your place among all the Wal-Marts and Targets in the world," he says. "We watch people laugh and point to their friends about a product, and then they say, 'I've gotta have that."

Contact Departments Editor Marion Hixon at mhixon@IAAPA.org.





Different Owners, Same Mission

Wahl working since 2002 for Walibi Belgium, is in his second season as general manager of the park, situated 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) south of Brussels. Opened in 1975, the park looks back at 35 years of successful operation. Major attractions include the suspended looping coaster "Vampire," a Boomerang looping

coaster, the interactive dark ride "Challenge of Tutankhamon,"

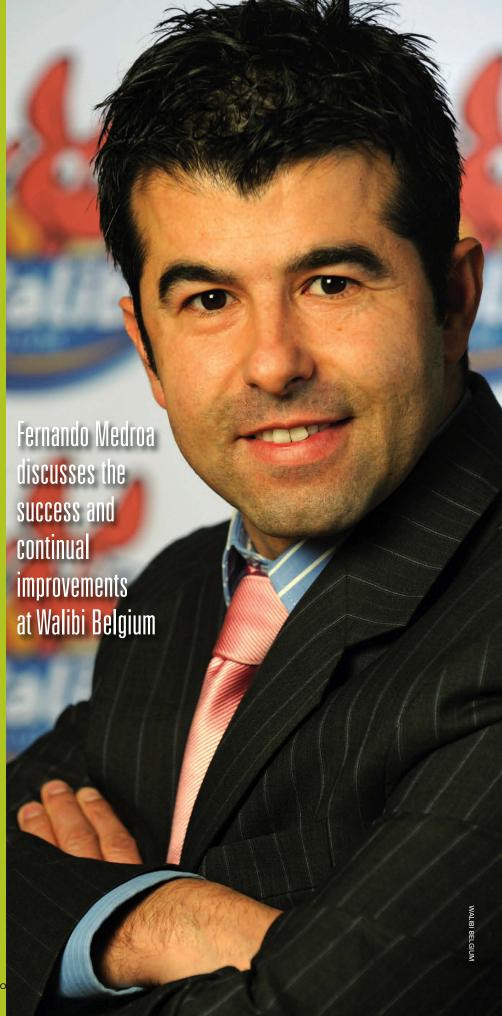
Fernando Medroa,

by Jakob

and much more.

Under the ownership of French group Compagnie des Alpes, which operates ski stations, parks, and other attractions all over Central Europe, Walibi recently invested in an intense renovation including an overhaul of its indoor waterpark, Aqualibi. With innovation and popular events, the park opposed the economic crisis and even broke a very special record in 2009.

FUNWORLD spoke with Medroa to uncover the secrets to his success.



What brought you to the industry?

I started in 1992 after leaving university. I arrived in Paris to work for Disney as an operator in the famous attraction "Pirates of the Carribean" before the opening of the park. I made my way up through various departments and stations before I left in 2002 for Belgium. I think this was the best way to understand the business in depth. It's important that you never forget how you started and where you come from, because it can also be a source of motivating the people around you.

You left Disneyland Paris for Walibi Belgium (Six Flags Belgium at that time), changing from a resort to a regional park. What led to this decision?

Disney was a wonderful experience for me, as it offers you so much training and you can start from the bottom and work yourself all the way up. I was approached by the general manager of Six Flags Belgium at that time, Vivianeen Paturel. She was a former Disney employee, as well, so she heard about me and approached me. I said to myself, "It's an industry that I love, and why not carry on? So why not Belgium?"

What did you bring from Disneyland Paris to Walibi/Six Flags?

A lot of things, but mainly the ability to create a team atmosphere. I started as director of operations and built a new team, a new culture. We also implemented new management tools in training and put different aspects in place; we changed operational things and concentrated more in terms of guest satisfaction (what does the guest mean to us?).

Disney helped me out a lot. Coming from a big park to a regional park, you can't make the "Disney Way" become the "Walibi Way." But you can adapt a lot of elements, which worked very well.

In the eight years since you started to work at the park you experienced several changes in the ownership. How did these affect the daily business?

In management terms it was an enrichment, as we learned from each owner. Each one of them has its own style and I think with each owner Walibi became a better park. Six Flags brought a lot of heavy investments, a lot of attractions, and a new way of working with more professionalism. Palamon was next, basically bringing back Walibi to the park, as Walibi is a part of the culture and the heritage—a brand that has so much power moving people here in Belgium.

So it wasn't a problem to move from the Six Flags name back to Walibi?

Exactly. During the times of Six Flags we had a very interesting experience; everyone was talking about Walibi Six Flags. It was never Six Flags on its own. Walibi always stayed in their minds. All the Belgians were very happy when the kangaroo came back.

All major Belgian amusement parks are owned by corporate groups. Why do you think this is?

I don't really have an explanation. Obviously parks are becoming more challenging to operate in terms of legislation, in terms of insurance, and in terms of money. For a family-owned business it can be very heavy today, capitalwise. You have to be prepared to invest if you want to be and remain a leader in the market.

What can you tell us about the Aqualibi renovation?

Aqualibi was a park really successful (2008 and 2009 were two years very successful in terms of visitors). So, the decision was made to build a new Aqualibi, to relaunch this beautiful waterpark for the next 20 years.

Aqualibi is an exceptional project with an investment of more than €10 million (US\$13 million). It is basically a new waterpark which will open in spring 2011 with a lot of new attractions: a new zone for kids from the age of 3 to 6 years, new waterslides with and without tubes, and a complete new look. It will have a contemporary look from inside and out.

"It's important that you never forget how you started and where you come from, because it can also be a source of motivating the people around you."

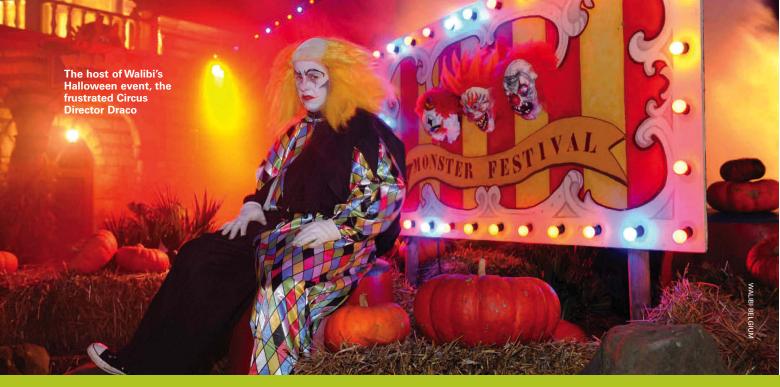
The whole project is a kind of reset; we worked a lot on those things that didn't work too well before. We're improving our cabins, the changing rooms, the hygiene, and, of course, its sustainability. For example, we managed to reduce CO2 emission around 40 percent by using solar panels to heat the water.

Talking about projects, you experienced the failure of "Vertigo," a coaster prototype, that was two years delayed and finally taken down at the end of the 2008 season. What happened?

"Vertigo" was a wonderful project in the years of Star Parks. It was an innovative and unique experience in terms of a new ride. Unfortunately, from an operational point of view, the attraction didn't fulfill its contract. And that's why basically it was a joint effort from Walibi and Doppelmayr to decide to take it down again. We were very sad to make that decision but we have to think first of our park.

Do you plan another coaster to fill up the gap left by "Vertigo"?

We are working on ideas, but we haven't decided anything. If we do put something in that area it has to be something big and visible. What it is, we don't know yet.



Your Halloween event has been very successful in the past few years. What are your future plans for this operation?

Halloween is very important for us. Walibi started Halloween in 2000, and today we are the market leader in Belgium, so every single year we have to make sure we are better than our competitors and we offer something new. In 2008 we started Draco, our monster festival. We created a new universe for Halloween with the story of Draco, a frustrated circus director who never succeeded in his life and decided to bring all his monster friends to Walibi. This proved to be extremely successful—in 2008 we welcomed 150,000 people in just 11 days.

We broke the all-time Walibi record with 24,000 visitors on Oct. 31, 2009. It is a very important event for us, and we are working on new surprises for this year—a new character and maybe something completely different in the spot formerly occupied by Vearea in front of our restaurant Sergio's.

With the successful Halloween event Walibi and some more parks turned a rather calm October in a very busy period. Are you looking into expanding into the winter season, as well?

No, for the time being we have no plans to open for Christmas. It doesn't mean we have abandoned the idea completely, but



we are trying to concentrate on doing the normal season at 100 percent. We still have some room to exploit our summer and Halloween seasons.

What has the recent economic crisis taught you about Walibi Belgium and the industry as a whole?

In this business, especially in the seasonal parks, you never know where you're going. You can anticipate much, but at the end of the day it will be the visitor and the client who decide. One thing that helped in 2009 was our "Big 7" concept; we focused on our seven major attractions in the park and did special events for each of them. For "Loup Garou," our wooden coaster, we created a real-size layout of the coaster in our parking lot. We invited around 1,000 people who came in the morning to form the layout and then spend the day in the park, which brought us a lot of press coverage.

Another example was our rapids ride, "Radja River," where we had a partnership with the canoeists from the Belgian river Lesse, a big river in Wallonia, Belgium. We had a competition with kayaks in "Radja River" and also took one of our boats to the Lesse. Things like that worked wonderfully and we had a lot of coverage.

Where do you see Walibi Belgium in five years?

That's not an easy question to answer. I see a park in growth, I see a park with premium quality in terms of product and guest satisfaction, and we want to stay the number-one park in Belgium. For us it's a big chance to have two products in one; you have an attractions park and you have an indoor waterpark, so you give the clients the possibility to choose. With our combined tickets, visitors have the chance to see both—something you won't find in any other park around. With a completely renewed waterpark, we look into a bright future.

Contact IAAPA Europe Program Manager Jakob Wahl at jwahl@IAAPA.org.

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by Marion Hixon

Being on the cusp of a trend is an exciting but risky thing. If you jump on the bandwagon early, what if no one follows? Will

the movement be embraced? The Health Museum in Houston, Texas, the National Museum of Crime and Punishment in Washington, D.C., and the Science Museum of Minnesota in St. Paul, are all facilities that recognized the trend of interactivity in exhibits and took the format to the next level by adding technology to the mix. They utilize video, cell phones, blogs, simulators, infrared technologies, and more to stay a step ahead of guests.

Unafraid to become the early adopter, each museum is getting guests involved and reenergized to visit and experience the information in a new way.

Health Museum Is Smart Phone Central

See that scrambled, patchwork-like, two-dimensional image on the sign next to the exhibit at The Health Museum in Houston, Texas? That's actually a web link. It's called a quick response (QR) code, and it can be scanned by smart phones (iPhones, Blackberries, or any other Internet-friendly PDA), which take a photo of the image, scan it, and redirect the user to a unique URL.

The Health Museum (www.mhms.org) is using QRs

throughout it's "Touch: The Science of Skin" exhibit, which premiered at the facility this fall and will travel starting next summer for the next seven years. Users who scan the image will be redirected to YouTube videos on the exhibit's subject matter.

The benefit to museum and other facilities with more information to share about specific topics is that this service can be an added luxury to their smart phone-using visitors, and it's virtually free. Most QR code generators are free online (the museum uses the services at www.scanlife.com, among others).

"You can build QR codes into any kind of activity you want," says Phil Lindsey, vice president of exhibits and business development at The Health Museum. "It can even provide entertainment if you're in a queue for hours on end. Every aspect of it—apart from creating the videos themselves—is all free."

Lindsey says The Health Museum is an early adopter of the QR code, but that he anticipates smart phones will grow ubiquitous and become the majority of cell phones owned in years to come. "Initially mom, dad, and the kids may not get it yet, but those who know how it works will be very jazzed by it," he says.

There is a lot of power in cell phones that double as mobile computing devices, he says. And in the future, the museum plans to continue to develop mobile applications, like interactive game content.





Static Exhibits a 'Thing of the Past' at Crime and Punishment Museum

A shooting gallery with infrared technology, a digital kiosk where you try to defuse a bomb, a safe where you can crack the code, and an interactive crime where visitors are at the scene of the crime and must help solve the case and digitally examine a body for wounds—each activity can be found within the National Museum of Crime and Punishment (NMCP, www.crimemuseum.org) in Washington, D.C.

Owner John Morgan, a former Disney employee and attractions entrepreneur, got the idea for creating such lively exhibits when he visited Alcatraz in 1998. While visitors travel to the famous United States prison to see it for themselves and learn more about it, Morgan recognized that the site served as both a historical landmark and experiential learning. He then took that concept to the topic of crime and punishment and, teaming up with friend John Walsh, creator and host of "America's Most Wanted" television show, established the museum in 2008.

"America is fascinated with crime and punishment," Morgan says. "Whether you watch TV, movies, news, or read the paper, it dominates our lives. However, static attractions are a thing of the past. People want action. To do and touch and play."

Technology-driven Exhibits at the National Museum of **Crime and Punishment**

Patrol Car Simulation and Firearm Training Situation (FATS) Stations: Easily the most popular stops in the museum, each exhibit meets law enforcement standards and puts guests behind the driving wheel and trigger, respectively.

"America's Most Wanted": The museum hosts the Fox TV show with a crime-solving focus, and visitors are allowed to walk through the studio. Every Saturday night guests can witness the show's call center—and sometimes the show's host, John Walsh-in action.

CSI Lab: After watching a crime occur via video and witnessing the evidence, guests are presented with the body of a dummy victim and are able to scan over different wounds and bruises to better understand weapon identification.

Shooting Gallery: Janine Vaccarello, COO at the museum, says adult visitors love this experience as much as the kids. Because the gallery employs infrared technology instead of lasers, shooting is more challenging.

Fingerprint and Facial Scan Technology: The recognition software compares facial and fingerprint scans with known criminals. Elsewhere in the museum, punishments following criminal activities are reinforced and guests can print personalized faux criminal rap sheets.

Computer Kiosks: Digital interactive stands are placed strategically throughout the museum. Some test knowledge; others test skill. Want to get out of jail? These kiosks allow visitors to attempt an escape, defuse a bomb, test crime-witness observation skills, and identify bullet holes and matching fingerprints. Another kiosk honors the fallen heroes of law enforcement and lists them by state.



Science Museum of Minnesota Allows Visitors Remote Access

The experts behind the exhibits at the Science Museum of Minnesota (SMM) are pretty brainy, but the largest brain at the facility may be Science Buzz (www.sciencebuzz.org), the online database originally funded by the National Science Foundation to build content on a wide range of current science topics at the museum. Originally the development team didn't intend for this to be a web tool, but that's where the database drew popularity.

Registered website users must be at least 13 years old with a working e-mail address, and can reach Science Buzz from any home computer and at multiple locations inside the museum. Once logged in, they create the content; they can write a post, comment on the posts of other members, add relevant topic "tags" to discussions, and submit questions for scientists. Liza Pryor, exhibit project leader for Science Buzz at SMM, and her counterparts are the wizards behind the curtain, cultivating discussions, picking questions to answer, and keeping the site structure consistent. Expert moderators have been brought on to maintain spiking comment boards.

"Science Buzz has an interface that's familiar to blog users, but on the exhibit floor, we can change that look," she says. "It may take the form of a quiz-show component, where three visitors compete against each other to answer questions, or we have a newscast where you sit

in front of a camera and Teleprompter with the St. Paul skyline behind you and read from the database feed."

Developers encourage a diversity of perspectives on the site, including visitors from all over the world, established scientists with research to share, and younger teens expressing a love for science. "We really use it as a research and development vehicle to figure out what people are interested in, and then we put our own perspective on it," Pryor says. "Instead of playing with materials and phenomena inside a museum, we're playing around with ideas."

Those ideas range from the minutely specific—fireflies and eggs laid by chickens are extremely popular topics—to the extremely current: When the tsunami hit Indonesia, Science Buzz writers were able to post thoughts and responses overnight.

"There are not a whole lot of places doing this in the museum world," Pryor says, adding often museum administration or public relations/marketing departments worry it's too risky to give guests the capability to post live content. "They're concerned about image, authority, and that participants are going to do or say something inappropriate. But almost universally, the experience has been really positive. Most of the time people just want to participate in what you're doing. And you also have your



"The web lets you do things you wouldn't be able to do otherwise. We had the only female board-certified entomologist in the upper Midwest as a 'Scientist on the Spot.' For her feature, we put a webcam on a decomposing pig as she commented on it. It became one of our most popular events. But we never would have been able to get away with that if we didn't have this reputation of trying cool, edgy stuff." — Liza Pryor, Science Museum of Minnesota

Almost every exhibit in the museum's five galleries has an interactive—and often technology-based—quality to it. Janine Vaccarello, chief operating officer at NMCP, says the interactivity helps guests process the information, encourages involvement from kids, and brings the information to life. She stresses the benefits of the museum's simulated activities being "real," meaning the outcome of an interactive challenge is entirely based on the performance of the partic-

ipant. For example, you can fail at being a reliable witness in a crime scene; you can accidentally run off the road in your simulated police chase; and you can fail at defusing a bomb in time at one of the computer challenges.

"D.C. is filled with great museums it's the gold standard—so we knew it was important to be on that level, while also being distinguished," Vaccarello says. "Our museum is experiencetouch, snap pictures, interact. For the 'CSI' lovers in everyone, your police academy begins here."

Just as important are the strategic locations of interactive exhibits throughout the museum. These are often the most popular stops and can easily get overcrowded by visitors. Vaccarello says pairing interactive exhibits gives guests a chance to choose an activity and helps thin queue congestion.

"Often visitors will be on a tight schedule, but they still want to get the full experience," she says. "If you pair interactive exhibits together, guests can choose to just do one, so their queue time is cut in half and they get the enjoyment of watching others go through the experience."

Contact Departments Editor Marion Hixon at mhixon@IAAPA.org.



Traveling Exhibits Showcase Wednesday, Nov. 17, 1 p.m.-3 p.m.

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RETAIL

In Their Own Backyards

Employing local vendors for retail merchandise can cut shipping costs and benefit the local economy

by Marion Hixon

Mass-produced mugs and T-shirts can be found in almost any store, and they'll undoubtedly continue to sell as practical, quality items. But there's something special about a locally made item that draws in guests at an attraction's retail stores.

"It adds a special touch to their visit," says Andrew Fischer, general manager of merchandising at the Monterey Bay Aquarium in California. "The guest is here to enjoy the aquarium, but by offering products that were crafted in the area, we elevate the memory they had here."

The aquarium maintains strong relationships with its local vendors, like Susan Bradshaw, the owner of Woven Time from Moss Landing (www.woventime.com). For several years, Bradshaw has produced an eclectic selection of fused glass sun catchers and other glass products for the aquarium. "Our buying team and Susan have worked together on new projects and developed many successful items our guests love," Fischer says. "We have grown our own business and, in turn, helped her business thrive."

Terry Blumer, ZooStore manager at the Woodland Park

Zoo in Seattle, agrees geo-specific items hold extra significance to buyers, allowing them to show off where they've traveled.

Besides stimulating the local economy, the decision to move ahead with local vendors also cuts back on fuel and energy used to deliver products. "In keeping within the alignment of the zoo's mission of sustainability, local warehousing and shorter delivery lessen the carbon footprint of goods by shortening the distance they travel to our dock," Blumer says.

Woodland Park Zoo is located near two of the Pacific Northwest's busiest ports. "This helps us utilize local



importers and custom souvenir manufacturers as well as small business operations," Blumer explains. Products bought from these businesses include food, souvenirs, clothing, local one-of-akind art, sundries, and plush.

Who Benefits?

The relationship between merchandiser and local vendors is often a mutually beneficial one.

"Many vendors are proud to say they are being represented in a Smithsonian-affiliated museum," says Elaine Molin, store manager at Conner Prairie History Museum in Fishers, Indiana, which carries locally made products, as well as merchandise made on site. "Vendors list on their fliers and websites that their goods are carried at our stores."

Blumer says businesses he's dealt with often link to the Zoo-Store website (www.cafepress. com/wpzmerch) on their own landing pages, helping to stimulate shop traffic. "The potential of establishing an ongoing relationship with a larger institution can provide a secure and steady stream of income, which is critical to small businesses," Blumer says. "And larger businesses also benefit from the repeat customer as well as the benefits of increasing a recognizable clientele base."

The networking opportunities in the local vendor community are valuable, as well. Silver Dollar City in Branson,

Homegrown Items

Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle

- Plush toys from Wishpets in Portland, Oregon
- Clothing from Polar Graphics in Kent, Washington
- Glass art from Pampeana in Lake Oswego, Oregon
- Musical instruments from Jamtown in Seattle, Washington

Conner Prairie History Museum in Fishers, Indiana

- Amish-made cashew crunch snacks from Rise n Roll in Middlebury, Indiana
- Pure Honey from Mount Carmel Honey in Fishers, Indiana
- Period and reproduction-inspired wood toys and musical instruments from Homestead FolkToys in Nashville, Indiana
- Handmade journals from Megan Winn in Indianapolis, Indiana

Missouri, holds a mutual referral commitment with its vendors, where each business recommends the other, and it improves business for all parties. "The feedback we receive from our vendors is tremendous," says Rick Crumley, director of merchandise at the park. "We always think of them as



Visit the IAAPA Blog at www.IAAPA.org/blog to read about how the Woodland Park Zoo populates its food and beverage selection through small, locally run concessionaires!



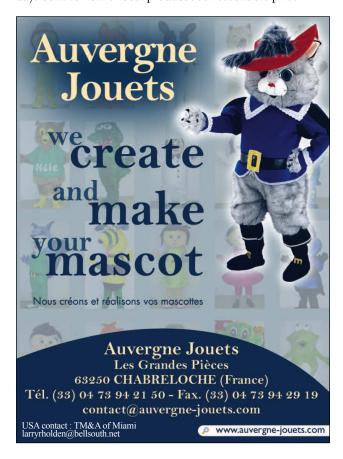
our partners because of the value we can give each other through the products and services we provide."



A Surprising **Retail Source**

Pen Products is a company representing Indiana state penitentiaries that pays incarcerated workers a small fee to make products. Conner Prairie contracts Pen Products employees to create some of its costumes. "We pay the state a price for each costume—

that helps defer state costs of running prisons," says Molin. "The workers then get a small wage and receive a trained skill, Conner Prairie gets beautifully made products, and the schools that want the costumes for their pioneer dress-up days benefit from a local product at a reasonable price."



"Our quests really enjoy the connection of the local area with our iewelry, gifts, and prints from the area, especially when they have local designs such as otters, seals, and whales—all identifiable with Monterey."

—Andrew Fischer, Monterey Bay Aquarium

Find the Right Products and Vendors

Know your merchandising standards when searching for products, advises Fischer. "We have a very stringent process that all prospective vendors must follow," he says. The aguarium's merchandise must reflect the marine life and conservation at the facility and, when possible, represent the marine habitat present in the surrounding Monterey Bay.

Merchandise managers agree it's important to look in nearby cities and at national trade and craft shows for the best local merchandise. "Always be shopping and on the lookout for creative and new vendors in the area," says Fischer, who visits surrounding cities like Santa Cruz, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Carmel, and Sausalito. "If you are not out looking, you won't find your next potential vendor."

Four ways to find the right vendors and products:

- 1. Go to trade shows and meetings. Elaine Molin at Conner Prairie says vendors are fairly easy to locate, and many of her contacts have been made while networking with peers at meetings and trade shows. "If their business is large enough, they'll attend shows or have sales reps," she says.
- 2. Spread the word. Local artisans know other artisans, so after establishing a relationship with a vendor, facility managers should ask the business owner for other connections. "In addition to visiting trade shows catering to the gift/resort/tourist market, word has gotten out that we like to support our local vendors whenever possible," says Terry Blumer, ZooStore manager at the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle.
- 3. Search the Internet. Molin says she often does Internet searches for local businesses, making it easy to review their selection.
- 4. Attend craft shows. Silver Dollar City's Rick Crumley says his team visits regional and national craft shows, as well as area businesses and the regional artist networks, "I have gone to many national shows and met craftsmen and artists from our own backyard," he says. "We search the area for locally made items, unique processes, colorful artisans, and stories."

Contact Departments Editor Marion Hixon at mhixon@IAAPA.org.



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PROFILE

It Shouldn't Work, but Does

How Arnaud Bennet carries on his father-in-law's legacy at France's Le Pal amusement and wildlife park

by Juliana Gilling

The Le Pal amusement park and zoo really shouldn't work, and yet it does with Gallic style. Le Pal's success seems to fly in the face of conventional theme park thinking, from its name—historically associated with cattle markets and castles rather than coasters—to its remote location. You'd be hard-pressed to find a more unlikely spot for an amusement park than the sparsely populated volcanic Auvergne region in the center of France, tucked away from the tourist routes.

None of these reasons, nor a lack of attraction experience, were enough to deter Le Pal's late founder and entrepreneur, André Charbonnier, from pursuing his dream in 1973. He wanted to capitalize on his love of wildlife by turning the family farm into a new kind of business, creating a place where visitors could see animals in naturalistic settings. Influenced by his trips to the United States, Charbonnier later added entertainment elements to reinforce the park's appeal. Over the past two decades, his son-in-law, Arnaud Bennet, a for-

mer executive marketing director at Dannon and long-time president of the French parks association, SNELAC, has led the team that is building on Charbonnier's legacy.

Animals Galore

Today, Le Pal covers 35 landscaped hectares (86.5 acres) and brings together more than 500 animals, 25 family rides, and three animal shows (sea lions, parrots, and birds of prey). It's the dual nature of Le Pal—both wildlife park and amusement park—that differentiates it from the competition, according to Bennet: "The double proposition has been a fantastic idea since the beginning. It means we have a strong and distinct personality, which is a big advantage."

The privately funded attraction is the number-one tourist destination in the Auvergne region. The business welcomed 514,000 visitors during its 2009 season (April to September)—far more than the 300,000-strong population of the Allier department [district] in which Le Pal is situated. The park's turnover reached €12 million (US\$15 million), excluding tax, and its team includes 58 permanent staff and 200 seasonal employees.

A Community Gem

Since Charbonnier's death in 1981, Bennet and the Le Pal team have embarked on a prolific program of development, guided by their innate understanding of the regional market. "As we are in the middle of nowhere, the people feel like Le Pal is their own park and they are proud of it," says Bennet.

When his team in 2009 unveiled the remake of Le Pal's original "King Kong" attraction, parents familiar with the first version rewarded the park by bringing their children to see the revamped attraction. Their loyalty helped the park to record its biggest attendance year.

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(62 miles) of the park, "The challenge is to increase attendance every year," Bennet says. "The first key is the satisfaction of visitors, and we score very highly. Also, we have one of the highest rates of investment in relation to turnover among French parks, and that's very important because we need people to come back regularly." Every year, Le Pal automatically reinvests 25 percent of its turnover, and research shows 80 percent of visitors return to the park.

Next year will see the arrival of a new Mack Spinning Coaster in the park's African village area. As part of the preparations, Le Pal's team opened a new restaurant there this season. Other 2010 projects included a tropical bird aviary, an area for the South American tapir, and an aquatic show, as well as the refurbishment of existing attractions.

Animal Care

Bennet believes Le Pal's philosophy is best illustrated by its protected elephant project: "We could have just created a nice big place for our two female Asian elephants, and we visited a lot of installations in Europe to see what they were doing. But we wanted to go even further. We wanted to try new things, like a big indoor space with sand floors, and we wanted to set up the best conditions for an ambitious reproduction program." The team's efforts paid off when conservation coordinators assigned two adult elephants from Zoo Vincennes in Paris to Le Pal, resulting in the birth of a new baby elephant in 2008.

"We are the only park in France, and one of the only zoos in Europe, to have the birth of an elephant. It gave us the recognition of the entire European zoo community," says Bennet. "We may not be the biggest zoo but, when we do something new, we will spend a lot of money to have a good installation. Our priority is the animals' well being."

Good for the Environment

Le Pal proves its green credentials in other ways, too. In 2007, all of the park's activities underwent an environmental audit: "We have now taken numerous measures to reduce the impact of the park on the environment," says Bennet. Improvements include wood-burning furnaces, environmentally friendly buildings, waste sorting, composting, recycling, and biomass production using animal effluent. The park hopes to gain Green Globe certification this year.

Le Pal has a responsibility to raise public awareness of environmental and conservation issues, Bennet believes. Besides visitor education initiatives like "Keeper for the Day," the park participates in many EEP (European Endangered Species Programmes) and supports conservation and biodiversity efforts through the Le Pal Nature Foundation.

Future Plans

Bennet and his team want to grow Le Pal's influence further



by adding a hotel to the park within the next four years. "We sell a two-day pass and we're trying to get people to stay longer, but it's difficult when you have a big weekend like Easter and all the hotels are full. We could have more people if there were more hotels," Bennet says. He hopes to build a themed hotel similar to a safari lodge, with decor and experiences designed to inspire guests to think more about the value of animals and biodiversity.

"Because we're not on the tourist circuit, the hotel will have to work for the few months that the park is open—it's difficult to make a big investment in a big hotel. Outside the season, there's no reason for people to come here," he says.

Overall, French parks are performing well, Bennet believes: "It's a major market, especially with Parc Astérix and Disney, and the business is still increasing every year." Le Pal's regional presence proved to be a strength during the global economic difficulties. "We didn't feel the financial crisis," he says. "Last year was a depressing year for the economy, but it was our best year for the park. People are staying closer to home, and our activities are a good fit for what they want to do with their leisure time."

Bennet is ensuring prices remain affordable for the rural population. "We prefer to get more visitors with a price that is low—we charge around €2-4 (US\$2.5-5) under the price that we could have, or that other parks with around 500,000 visitors charge. It's very popular with our clientele, and it makes for easy access to Le Pal."

Above all, what makes Le Pal successful is simple, says Bennet: "For me, it's the human dimension of the company. People are at the heart of everything we do; there's a lot of respect and everybody's contribution is important. It's one of the things we all feel; we like what we do and we come to work smiling.

"Actually, I think the visitors feel that, too."

For more on Le Pal, visit www.lepal.com.

Juliana Gilling is a special attractions journalist. E-mail: julianagilling@gmail.com.

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A Community Connection

How a Maine FEC helps bind a small town's residents together through innovative programs

by Mike Bederka

Lux Beram-Butcher worked as a kitchen and bath designer in Maine for more than 10 years. Then, the economy tanked, and her once-bustling schedule began to clear out. So, like many people around the world, Beram-Butcher eyed a second career.

She started out small, renting baby equipment to families traveling to the area or to grandparents who needed something for their visiting grandkids. That venture did well so she rented out inflatables, too, a wrinkle that became equally suc-

cessful. Beram-Butcher then began fielding call after call from satisfied customers asking for an indoor bounce house facility. (With Maine weather notoriously rough, outdoor inflatables have a limited window of usefulness.)

"A light went off," the 31-year-old recalls. "We needed a place like that."

The Playroom of Maine, located in the rural town of Warren—population of about 4,000—opened November 2009. Yet, in less than a year, the 10,000-square-foot venue has grown well past the original bounce house business model. "We have come leaps and bounds since then," Beram-Butcher says.

The mother of three, including a set of twins, noticed a disconnect among families in her area. Parents only gathered at each other's houses; they lacked a common meeting spot where kids—and parents—could play and socialize. "The Playroom is very intimate," the owner notes. "Having that smaller mentality has really contributed to our success."

The facility features two inflatables, a small arcade, climbing wall, ride-on toys, toddler soft play, and pre-school area. Beyond that, its special programs and events help to differentiate this family entertainment center (FEC) from many others out there, Beram-Butcher says.

Her work isn't going unnoticed. She earned the Innovative in Business Award from her regional chamber of commerce in April, granted in honor of The Playroom's proactive and innovative approach toward business challenges and for embracing change as an opportunity for growth.

Reaching Out

Obviously, an FEC should be a place for parents and their children to have fun together, but that same facility can be used to help parents connect *away* from their kids, Beram-Butcher believes. That philosophy spawned this year's Valentine's Day event.

Staffed by three adults, The Playroom served as a babysitter/entertainer for 20 kids as their parents went out for an evening on the town. Over the course of three hours, the children created Valentine's Day-themed arts and crafts, made cards for their folks, created balloon animals,

got their faces painted, munched on pizza and healthy snacks, and ended the night by curling up in their sleeping bags and watching "Be My Valentine, Charlie Brown." Beram-Butcher charged \$12 per child and plans to make this a yearly event. "The parents were thrilled to spend time with each other," she says. Two sets of parents even went out on a double date.

Be in FUNWORLD

Do you know someone in the family entertainment center industry who should be profiled in FUNWORLD? E-mail Mike Bederka at mbederka@IAAPA.org with details.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Marketing on the Cheap

The Playroom of Maine's early success cannot be attributed to a massive marketing budget, says owner Lux Beram-Butcher. In fact, she spends barely anything to promote her various offerings. She instead focuses her marketing efforts on simple (cheap) things like in-house posters and a constantly updated Facebook page. Beram-Butcher also uses an e-newsletter, which goes out to approximately 900 people in the community. Strong word of mouth helps, too.

Beram-Butcher also had the region's adults in mind when she created a women's fitness program at The Playroom. The classes, which now range from Pilates to cardio kickboxing to aerobics, started off casually by some moms talking about wanting to shed the baby weight, she says. "The fitness program took off because there was this common interest that unified them." Beram-Butcher describes the classes as a fun, pressure-free environment. For one '80s-themed class, the women all dressed up in era-appropriate spandex, leggings, and headbands. Some of the women in the classes don't even have children—they just want to be part of the group. But for those who do, the kids can play in an adjacent room while the moms work out. She charges \$108 for a 12-visit pass; \$60 for

Teaming up with physical and occupational therapists has turned into another growth area for Beram-Butcher. PTs and OTs find The Playroom to be the perfect location to work with children with cognitive disabilities or developmental delays, she says: "We have so many different kinds of areas that help with gross motor skills or fine motor skills."

OTs and PTs can observe the kids in more active settings like the monkey bars or climbing wall or keep things calmer by letting them play with the train table or go to the reading

For the future, Beram-Butcher sees targeting home schooling families as one more way to make inroads in the area. These families currently come in sporadically, but this fall she would like to dedicate a formal time slot for them. Some ideas she's batting around include hosting periodic elective courses like physical education class or a presentation from a local biologist, or perhaps a home school family night out with pizza and games.

Whatever she decides on, it's likely the crowds will follow. "The community has really embraced us," she says gratefully. "They have been our biggest supporters."

> Contact Contributing Editor Mike Bederka at mbederka@IAAPA.org.



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FEC TRENDS

Seven Thoughts on the Future

What lies ahead for the family entertainment center industry?

by Mike Bederka

To stay ahead of the competition, family entertainment center (FEC) owners have to remain adaptable to the current environment: whether it's simply adding a new wrinkle to their facilities or adjusting their entire business philosophies. What changes will lead to success? FUNWORLD asked several FEC experts where they think the industry is heading.

come and go," he says. "What we have to do to get them in is to come up with new and better attractions: climbing courses, zip lines, and faster coasters."

Sense of Excitement

The "wow experience" should begin before guests even enter your FEC, says Erik Guthrie, vice president of marketing and sales at Zone Laser Tag, which has more than 335 locations worldwide. For instance, facilities could decorate the trees outside with constantly changing lights. "A lot of times FECs are just these giant boxes," he says. "Nobody can see what they are from the road. We should take a page from Las Vegas."

The branding needs to continue right into the lobby—the first and last place guests see inside the FEC and an often-neglected area, says Armando Lanuti, creative experience broker for Creative Works Theme Factory in Mooresville, Indiana: "How do they know what your laser tag arena looks like if you haven't brought any of that theming out into the lobby? How can they get excited about it? That's when their memories can potentially begin."

Expand Your Audience

Birthday parties, of course, generate significant revenue for FECs, but they can only go so far. Facilities have to expand their appeal into different markets and draw a broader audience, says Rich Sanfilippo, owner of Sam's Fun City in Pensacola, Florida. He believes FECs need to start making their venues more of an entertainment complex to draw a 20-something crowd. Some FECs already have added alcohol or are considering it.

However, George Smith, president of Barrington, Illinois-based Family Entertainment Group, urges caution when going after teens and young adults. "They are fickle markets that

Three More Ideas

Erik Guthrie of Zone Laser Tag sees three more trends in their infancy that FECs can jump on:

- VIBs. A few of his major bowling clients allocate space for "very important bowler" lanes. Four to six lanes, built in their own section or another room, feature nicer furnishings and a dedicated server, he says. Perfect for corporate events or higher-scale birthday parties, the VIB lanes will cost guests a premium.
- 2. Comedy shows. He works with one FEC that books comedians for the slow periods. "Why not on a Tuesday night have a ministage and bring in local comedians," says Guthrie, adding facilities could charge \$5 a head.
- 3. Quinceañera celebrations. The Hispanic coming-of-age ceremony is a virtually untapped market for FECs, he says.

FEC TRENDS

Stronger Food **Offerings**

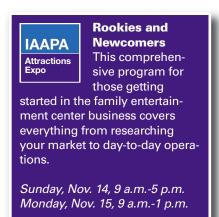
Food often has been an afterthought, says Sanfilippo, a member of the IAAPA FEC Committee. Now, it must be a primary concern for a facility to be success-

Some FECs have started to partner with powerful restaurant franchises like Subway, Pizza Hut, and Dairy Queen to help raise the quality level of the eats, he notes. "A good food product is the lead for anything that's going to work," adds Smith, also a member of the committee.

Store-in-a-Store **Redemption Areas**

Employees at traditional redemption counters can only help one or two customers at time. A "store-in-a-store" redemption model can handle more guests and it requires less staffing, Guthrie says.

With the latter, guests are basically shopping in an enclosed environment, he explains. Most of the redemption items are on display; customers can physically pick up and touch the products. When they pick out what they want, they simply take it to the staffed checkout counter. The self-service system increases efficiency and improves inventory control, Guthrie says.



What's Your Take?

Where do you see the future heading for the FEC industry? E-mail mbederka@IAAPA.org and we'll post your thoughts on our In the Queue blog at www.IAAPA.org/blog.

Don't Stop Reinvesting

Even in a turbulent economy, Smith's Family Entertainment Group is still growing. "Last year was our best year, and this year we're ahead of last," boasts the

industry veteran.

The biggest key to this success: constantly reinvesting in equipment and technology, regardless of the economy. Owners who stop investing in their business will be behind the curve when the economy picks up again. So, when the economy takes another dip in the future (which it likely will), don't be afraid to put some money back into the FEC, Smith advises.

Hybrid Entertainment

More facilities will turn to entertainment that's a mix of an attraction and an arcade game, Lanuti anticipates. For example, he points to mini-bowling and his company's Lazer Frenzy, IAAPA Attractions Expo 2009's Best New Product for FEC Ride/Attraction.

These "mini-attractions" offer an experience the consumer can't get at home, and they don't require staffing. "That's going to be a big draw," he says.

Technology Boost

In the past, only larger FECs booked birthday parties through online reservation programs or owned debit card systems. That's changing, Guthrie believes. More mom-and-pop facilities are using technology to make their businesses run smoother.

Several companies have introduced low-cost card readers to help instigate this shift, he says. Now, locations with only 30 or 40 games can move to a cashless system.

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Retail trends are tricky

When do you get in? When do you get out? What do you do if you choose poorly? by Adrea Gibbs

Remember when the Pet Rock came out in the 1970s? Everyone had to have one, and they could be found everywhere from attractions to grocery stores and just about any place in between. But, as with anything, the fad cooled and retailers were left with, literally, a pile of rocks. For those who got in and got out, it was a boon. For those who took notice too late in the game, it was bad news.

Quarterly, seasonally, annually—it happens to every buyer of retail. Vendors come in with the latest and greatest, often recommending the "new thing" to help keep everyone ahead of the merchandise curve. The challenge is trying to assess how those new, potentially time-sensitive products may play out in your venue. Determining what makes the most sense can be a gamble when additional factors include location demographics, seasonality, and cost of goods.

By definition, a "trend," according to Dictionary.com, is "style; vogue: (for example) the new trend in women's apparel." In the attractions industry, a trend in retail can have numerous benefits; providing an item in line with current interests, a potential per cap spending increase, and presenting a visual illustration that the location is "up with the times." On the flip side, the same positives can prove to be a negative.

One of the current trends in fashion is the "burn out" shirt, which has undergone a distressing process to create a weathered/worn look leaving a part of the fabric sheer. There are many apparel vendors who are currently carrying this product, and you will find it on the racks of many popular



retail chains and smaller boutiques. The design appeals to customers while still reinforcing the attraction's branding.

Something this hot obviously could be big for your facility, but before embarking on a trend—fashion or otherwise—take into consideration a few questions:

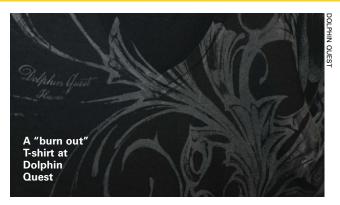
Does this product match the demographics of your guests and their interests? If your current attendees are teens and young adults, a product such as the "burn out" T-shirt might prove ideal. However, if you cater to a preschool crowd, it might not be the best choice.

Can the product be branded? Does it need to be? Do your present retail objectives include bringing more branded merchandise in, or do you need to diversify with nonbranded items? Finding how the product will enhance your present mix will assist you in deciding if it is a good match for your location.

Would this replace or augment current stock? If you are growing your inventory, does this fit into your overall plan for pricing, age targets, and gender breakdowns, or does it replace something that has itself gone out of style or simply isn't selling? If you are looking to expand your retail options, something trendier may be a good way to go.

What kind of quantity determines a minimum order or leverages a price break? Some vendors will allow you to purchase in low volume, especially with a newer product, so you can test the waters. However, you need to look at where their price breaks are if testing out a product works within your overall buying strategy. If you do go with a smaller quantity, and it winds up being a strong seller for you, you also need to know what might be the turnaround time on stock replacement. Being able to replace popular—particularly trend-based—items quickly is critical.

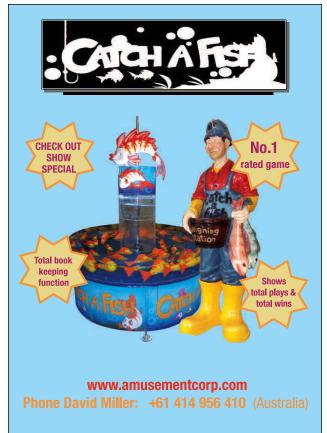
Is the price point workable and can you create a markup that falls into alignment with your other products and still offers you a good return on investment? Does the cost of goods make sense in your market? You need to be able to mark the product up enough to make sense for your bottom line and be a viable seller for your demographic.



And, possibly most important...

If it doesn't sell, what is your plan to recoup your loss? If your product does not sell, how you can move it? Some aspects to consider are price reduction, bundling with another product to make it more enticing, selling it to team members at a special rate, or donating it to a nonprofit. Regardless of the route you choose, have a plan in place to liquidate the product.

Each time you are looking for new product you will be presented with a variety of options ranging from the most basic to what is in vogue. Even taking into account the latest fashion colors can be a difficult decision. When you only have so much in your budget, you need to make careful deci
Continued on page 61







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Special Report



Why and how to benchmark an area of your facility against other industry leaders

by Neva Richardson-Larson

Benchmarking is the process through which a company measures its products, services, and practices against its toughest competitors, or those companies recognized as leaders in its industry.

It's an important process, as it helps managers determine if the company is performing particular functions and activities effectively, if its costs are in line with those in the industry, and if its internal activities and business processes need improvement. The purpose behind benchmarking is to measure internal processes against an external standard; furthermore, it's a way of learning which companies are best at performing certain activities and functions so others can learn from or improve on their techniques.

Some things benchmarking might help you better understand:

- Where costs savings could be easily made in your business
- How the profit level of your business compares with others in the same industry.
- Areas of potential revenue growth.

For example, you might identify that:

- Your percent of total payroll is significantly higher than other similar attractions and reevaluate your hiring and pay practices.
- Your inventory costs are higher than competitors', indicating you might need to reduce waste or negotiate better rates from your suppliers.
- Your income per guest is lower than the industry average, meaning you may want to look at price structures and products offered.

Get Started

A few areas to consider when benchmarking your activities and performance:

 Determine which functional areas you are interested in benchmarking.

- Identify the key factors and variables with which to measure those functions.
- Select the best in the industry companies for each area to be benchmarked.
- Measure the performance of the best-in-class companies for each of the benchmarks being considered.
- Measure your own performance for each variable and begin comparing your results with the industry standards.
- Review the results, and develop a plan of action to address some of the variances.
- Implement these plans by setting specific improvement targets and deadlines; be sure to monitor, track, evaluate the progress, and make changes as needed.

How to Use Benchmarking Data

The goal of benchmarking is to identify the weaknesses within an organization and improve them. It may also identify areas where you might be better than the industry. The idea is to incorporate the best-of-the-best industry practices into your operations. Here's an example of how you could use this data to benchmark an operation within your company:

Your boss has asked you to use the benchmarking process to look into how your organization might improve your food and beverage revenue in 2010. Company XYZ is located in the United States and has attendance of fewer than 500,000 per year.

- The area to be addressed is the food and beverage revenue for 2010.
- The key factors might be the types of food and beverage operations you have in the park and what percent of overall food and beverage they represent.
- Your benchmarking is going to be the 2009 IAAPA "Managing Attractions for More Profit" survey (see details below).

Continued on page 61



Are you serious about your career?

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Benchmarking

Continued from page 58

■ The survey says for operations in the United States with fewer than 500,000 per year, the food and beverage operations offered are as follows:

	US &	Fewer than
	Canada	500,000
Food Carts	45.1%	36.9%
Quick Service	71.4%	68.9%
Full Service	28.6%	27.2%
Alcohol Service	35.2%	37.9%
Branded Food	22.0%	15.5%

An International Survey of Operational Performance pg. 31

■ XYZ food and beverage operations offered are:

Full Service 70.5% 29.5% Food Carts

- In comparing XYZ and the industry it would appear that XYZ is heavy in full-service operations, with a few food carts. The action plan may be to look at converting some of the full-service locations to quick service and expand the food carts. This action might not only increase revenue, but it might also reduce labor costs and cost of goods sold.
- After more study by XYZ and new revenue projections calculated for food and beverage, the proposed changes are made for the 2010 season. It will be important that XYZ tracks these changes to ensure revenue does increase and labor costs decrease.

Get the Data

One of the more difficult steps in this process is obtaining data from the best in the industry. As a member of IAAPA you have access to such information through a survey directed by the IAAPA Financial and Information Technology Committee titled "IAAPA Managing Attractions for More Profit, 2009 edition, An International Survey of Operational Performance" (available at www.IAAPA.org /bookstore). This data was collected through an online survey that was e-mailed to more than 3,000 individuals representing hundreds of unique attractions worldwide. Responses for the 2008 financial year were collected during June 2008 and June 2009. Usable responses were received from 152 attractions.

The analysis of the survey data on amusement/attractions from around the globe provides information every attraction owner or manager needs; the report was designed by attraction operators for attraction operators and presents the most current and relevant information in a format that is easy to use.

Neva Richardson-Larson has more than 30 years' experience in accounting, finance, and operations, including 20 years in various positions within the hospitality/attraction industry. She is currently chair of the IAAPA Finance and Information Technoloav Committee.

Retail Trends

Continued from page 57



sions that make the most sense for your attraction. Still, given all the opportunity to analyze your in-house data, one factor still remains—that gut instinct as to whether or not it will sell. No one wants to be left with last year's pet rock.

Presently the general manager of Dolphin Quest Hawaii, Adrea Gibbs has worked extensively as a consultant in entertainment and merchandise throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. She is active on both the merchandising and hall of fame committees for IAAPA.



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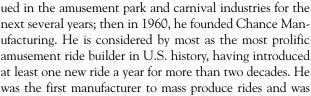
For further information and eligibility please contact: Andrew Clements (clem@zeus.net.nz) on +64 21 662575; or Dave Lock (dave@zeus.net.nz) on +64 9 302 5247.

IDWAY

ln Brief

PEOPLE

REMEMBRANCE: Harold Chance, ride design and manufacturing pioneer, died July 10, 2010. He was 88. Chance was born September 25, 1921, in Wichita, Kansas. He graduated from Wichita North High School in 1939. Chance was a welder and tool and die maker for the defense industry until 1944, when he joined the U.S. Army, serving in the South Pacific. Upon returning to the States in 1946, he began working for a train manufacturer building small trains operated in amusement parks. He soon met his future wife, Marge, and they were married in October 1946. Within 10 years, they had five children. Chance's career contin-





Harold and Marge on their wedding day in 1946

among the first ride builders to trailer mount portable rides. Through his personal financial assistance, his participation, and his influence, in 1972 he created what is now considered the world's largest annual amusement ride safety seminar, now run by the Amusement Industry Manufacturing & Suppliers International. The reach of his influence is so wide that he remains the only person who has been installed into the top three amusement industry major halls of fame: International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, Outdoor Amusement Business Association, and Amusement Industry Manufacturers

and Suppliers Association. He was a member of the Rotary Club of Wichita for 20 years, and he belonged to the Rolling Hills Country Club since 1963. He is survived by his wife, Marjorie; son Richard; daughters Susan, Judy, and Nancy; sister Mary; 13 grandchildren; and 11 great-grandchildren.

REMEMBRANCE: Stanley Roger Nelson, owner of Joyland Park in Wichita, Kansas, died July 13, 2010. He was 87.

Nelson was born June 24, 1923, in Mount Vernon, New York. After being honorably discharged following World War II, during which he was a navigator in the CBI theatre, he moved to Wichita to attend Wichita



Stanley Nelson

State University. He began his career in amusement parks selling tickets at Joyland Park's "Dodgem" car ride. His future wife, Margaret, was working at the Skeeball game. They were married for 59 years and operated the park together for 50 years. During his career, Nelson played a critical role in developing industry safety standards, and he served as president of IAAPA in 1972. He is survived by his wife, Margaret; sons, Roger and Steve; daughters Valorie and Barbara; 17 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

MARKETING TEAM MEMBERS: Merlin Entertainments Group announced the first three members of Legoland Florida's marketing team, which will immediately begin working on the first Legoland park on the U.S. East Coast. Kim Isemann will serve as director of sales and marketing, Todd Andrus will become manager of sales, and Jackie Wallace will be a public relations representative. Isemann brings considerable theme park and attractions marketing experience to her new role and will head the park's estimated 20person marketing team. Isemann recently served as general manager of the Daytona 500 Experience attraction and, prior to that, held several positions with SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment. Andrus is a 13-year sales veteran from SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, and Wallace comes to Legoland Florida with promotions and media relations experience at SeaWorld and Busch Gardens. www.legolandfloridaresort.com

ACQUISITIONS: Parks & Resorts Scandinavia has announced the acquisition of Furuvik amusement park and zoo in Gävle, Sweden. Officials at Parks and Resorts Scandinavia says it will continue to provide "complete, world-class experiences" for guests as an exciting, family-oriented amusement park. Furuvik was founded in 1900 as an Americanstyle leisure and recreation park. www.parks-resorts.com

J&J Snack Foods has announced that its subsidiary company, J&J Snack Foods Corp. of California, has acquired the assets of California Churros, a manufacturer of churros in Colton, California,



with sales of \$11 million in 2009. J&J said members of the Martinez family, which founded California Churros, will stay on board to serve the company, which will remain in Colton. www.jjsnack.com



Visit the Give Kids The World Booth during the Attractions Expo in Orlando to purchase your Chance to Win a 2010 Honda Civic hybrid. 1 ticket for \$25 3 tickets for \$50 7 tickets for \$100

givekidstheworld.org

MIDWAY

ln Brief

RELOCATED: High-tech rides and attractions manufacturer Premier Rides has moved its headquarters to Baltimore, Maryland, from Millersville, Maryland, as a part of its plans for expansion. Premier acquired the former Baron Co. & Cigar Building, originally built in the 1800s, and embarked on an extensive historic restoration and technical upgrade of the 35,000-square-foot structure. The company noted that although the building is historic, the office will utilize state-of-the-art technologies to stay at the cutting edge of themed entertainment. www.premier-rides.com

Systems, a global visual technologies company, received several industry awards in the first half of 2010, including honors from major technology magazines for its large venue projectors. The company also received the Janus de l'Industrie

Award from the French Institute of

Design for outstanding creative

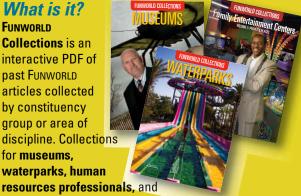
RECOGNITION: Christie Digital



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products in the field of industrial design for its MicroTiles display technology. Christie was also named one of Canada's Greenest Employers by MediaCorp for achieving an 82 percent waste diversion rate at its Canadian manufacturing facility and a 41 percent reduction in natural gas usage. www.christiedigital.com

PRODUCTS

CUDDLY PRIZES: Domo, the brown, saw-toothed character that is the popular mascot for NHK television (Japan Broadcasting Company) in Japan, is now available as a prize for crane machines. Coast-to-Coast Entertainment is offering crane machine mixes of 20 percent, 50 percent, or 100 percent Domo



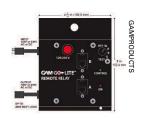
products. The remaining items in the 20 percent and 50 percent mixes are generic. www.cranemachines.com

ADVANCED MOTION CAPTURE:

Animazoo UK Ltd has announced the release of its latest professional motion capture system, the Gypsy 7. The company describes the system as "state-of-the-art exo-skeletal gyroscopic hybrid technology." The Gypsy 7 is ideal for the motion capture environment because it utilizes military-grade gyroscopes and no-lag, no-

noise joint sensors. The standard Gypsy 7 includes Animazoo's unified Version 10 operating software, which combines the necessary tools for system calibration, online streaming, multi-actor synching, key frame editing, and dynamic capture. www.animazoo.com

GAMING RELAY: The new GAM GO-LITE Remote Relay has been introduced by GAMPROD-UCTS, Inc. to handle loads of up to 4,000 watts. Users can select AC or DC relays at 120 volts or 230 volts. The Remote Relay is operated from the GAM GO-LITE low-voltage



controller. It's housed in a sturdy steel enclosure and can be hung or mounted to a flat surface. Indicator lights let users know when power is available to the Relay, when the control signal is present, and if the Relay has been activated. www.gamonline.com

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IAAPA understands the attractions industry. Behind the smiles and fun it's about being safe, innovative, informed, visionary, and efficient. For more than 90 years, IAAPA has worked with attractions and suppliers of all types and sizes. No matter what your role in the industry, IAAPA connects you to the people, products, and services that will set the stage for success.

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AMUSEMENT PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS www.IAAPA.org • membership@IAAPA.org

CALENDAR

This is a partial listing of trade shows, conventions, and seminars of interest to the attractions industry. Submit information marked "Funworld Calendar" via fax +1.703/738-7393 or e-mail at funworld@IAAPA.org.

MEMBER WEBINARS:

Time Management:

Skills for Success in Any Workplace

Sept. 22, 1 p.m. EDT

Learn simple skills and techniques that you can quickly adopt or implement to help you accomplish your work more efficiently. SPEAKER: O. Lee Mincey, President, 4 KeysConsulting.

Business Operations:

Essentials for FECs and New Small Businesses Oct. 20, 1 p.m. EDT

Whether you are starting a new FEC or looking to improve operations at an existing one, this presentation will offer tactics and lessons that can help streamline your administrative tasks. SPEAKER: Leslie Hutcheson, 20-plus-year industry veteran and FEC executive.

Webinars are free to members. Registration required. www.IAAPA.org/education/elearn/elearning.asp

September

► 9-11 JAMMA 2010

Makuhari Messe Tokyo, Japan www.jamma.or.jp

+81/351575880

► 11-16 AZA Annual Conference

Houston Zoo Houston, Texas

www.aza.org

22-25

EAZA Annual Conference

Parco Natura Viva Bussolengo, Verona, Italy

www.eaza.net

> 29-October 1 SAGSE Gaming and Amusement Expo 2010

Centro Costa Salguero Buenos Aires, Argentina

www.monografie.com/esp

➤ 30-October 1 TEA SATE 2010

Universal Orlando Resort Orlando

www.teaconnect.org/sate.htm

October

▶ 6-8

Euro Attractions Show (EAS) 2010

Fiera Roma Rome, Italy

www.IAAPA.org/EAS

► 6-9 WWA Annual Symposium and Trade Show

Hyatt Regency River Walk & San Antonio Convention Center San Antonio, Texas

www.waterparks.org

▶ 20-24 Pinball Expo 2010

Westin Chicago North Shore Chicago, Illinois

www.pinballexpo.net

November

▶ 15-19 IAAPA Attractions Expo 2010

Orange County Convention Center Orlando

www.IAAPA.org

▶ 16-18 Global Gaming Expo 2010

Las Vegas Convention Center Las Vegas, Nevada www.globalgamingexpo.com +1 800/363-3631

January 2011

> 25-27 ATEI/ICE 2011

Earls Court, London www.atei-exhibition.com

► 30-February 4 IAAPA Institute for

Executive EducationSan Diego State University
San Diego, California

E-mail: John Henderson at jhenderson@IAAPA.org.

March

▶ 1-3

Amusement Expo 2011

Las Vegas Convention Center Las Vegas, Nevada www.amusementexpo.org

► 15-17 IAAPI Amusement Expo 2011

Bombay Exhibition Centre Mumbai, India www.iaapi.org

► 16-18 RAAPA 2011

All-Russian Exhibition Center Moscow, Russia www.raapa.ru

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Inquiry by E-mail: rayexpo@hotmail.com

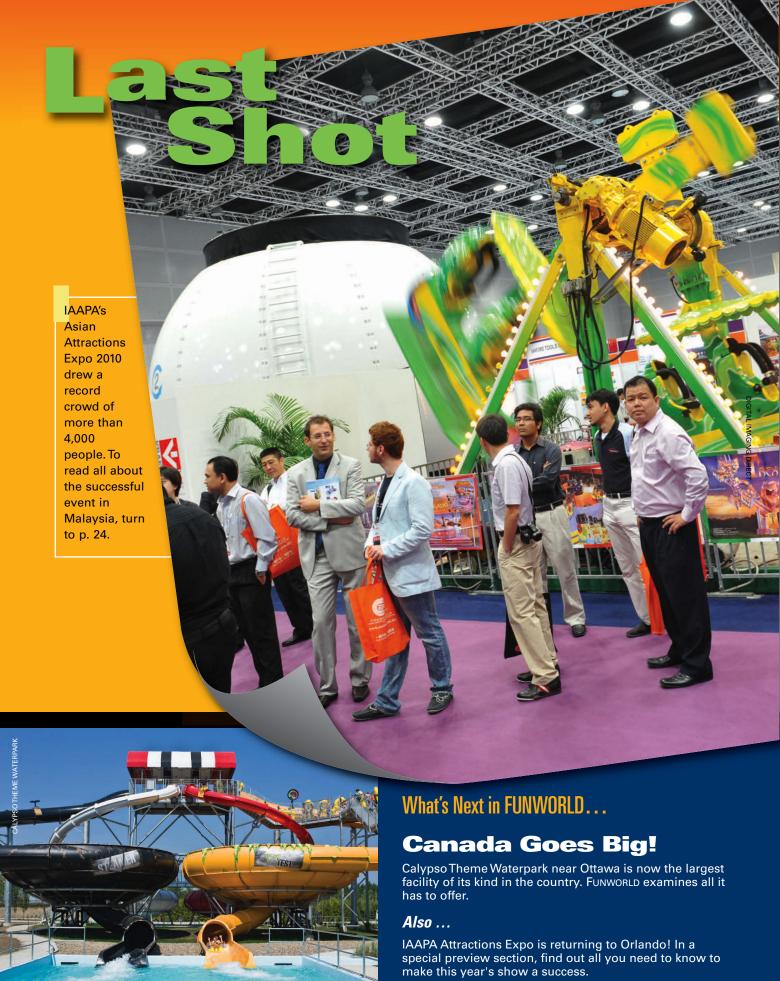




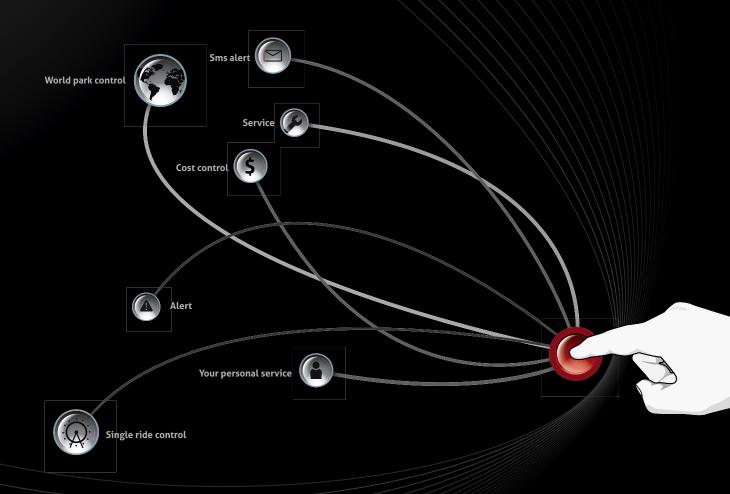








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